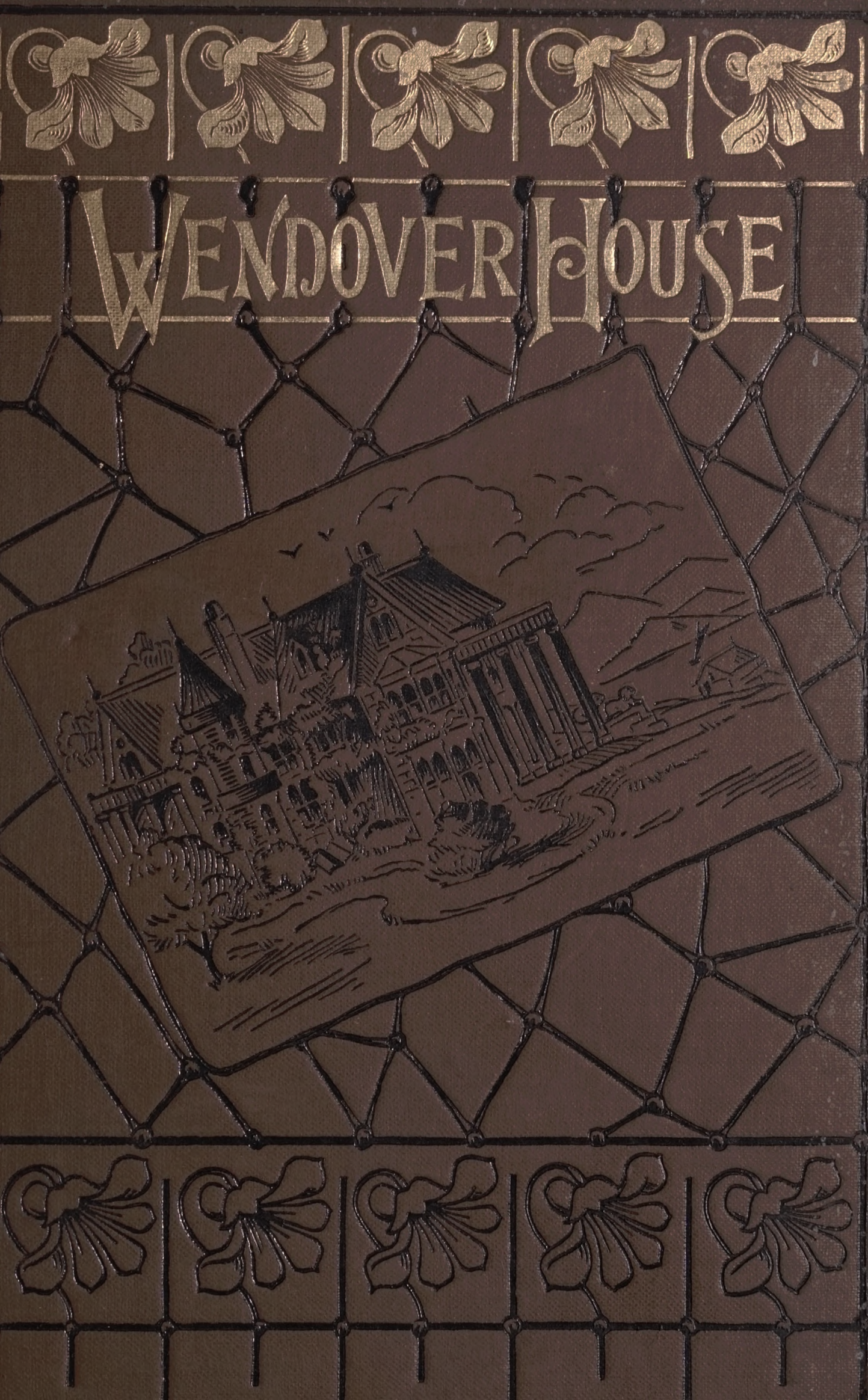
WENDOVER HOUSE



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WENDOVER HOUSE.

BY

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WENDOVER HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

AGNES' STORY

"'Tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves."

ONE afternoon when I was about nine years old, I sat by the fire in Nurse Hillyer's room turning over the leaves of my book, and wishing that it were tea-time; for the days seemed long then, and the great house empty. Nurse Hillyer was knitting a long gray stocking and reading "Baxter's Saint's Rest," a favorite book of hers, and I wished that she would put it down and talk to me. I was tired of the constant click, click of the needles, and the occasional turning of leaves. I remember just how the wind roared in the chimney, and how the rain dashed against the window-panes. The fire that glowed brightly upon the hearth, was the most comfortable object in the room.

Aunt Wendover's fires never glowed, and the

rooms at Wendover House were not bright nor pleasant. I liked the great, dim library better than any other room, but that grew very lonely toward night, so I often took my book and went to Nurse Hillyer's room; for, as I said, her fire was bright and cheery.

Next to the library I liked the long, dark gallery where the family portraits were hung. A little organ stood there, and I used to play on it, very softly so no one could hear me; for Aunt Wendover would not have any music in the house. A great piano stood in the drawing-room, but I had never seen it opened. I knew it was a piano because Nurse Hillyer told me so, and I had a great curiosity to see what it looked like. I had often tried to raise the lid, but it would not open, and I used to wonder how the sound must feel all shut up in that dark case.

One day while rummaging in the gallery in the east wing, I noticed a square, box-like piece of furniture. I opened it, and saw some yellow keys, but when I touched them they gave no sound. Then I put one foot on the pedals and struck the keys. I stopped in fright, for I had found its voice. But I soon lost my fear, and I stayed there a long time, trying to follow a tune that I had heard Barbara, the maid, sing. It was something about a young girl who

was alone in the world, and who was dying of want and loneliness, and it had a sad little refrain: "never again, never again." I succeeded in picking out part of the tune, and day after day I went there, till I could make out the whole song, playing it with one finger. Then I tried to make the organ tell how I felt, shut up in a great house, with nobody to love me, and where nothing ever happened. I found much pleasure in this, and when I was particularly sad, I would creep away to the organ for consolation. I don't think that the stiff ladies and gentlemen in the frames above me minded me, and I disturbed no one else. It was an eerie place, for I was a nervous, imaginative child, and I sometimes fancied that the people in the frames moved and looked at me. One day I was sure that a high-ruffed lady just above the organ shook her finger at me. I screamed so loudly that all the household came running to see what was amiss. Aunt Wendover came too, and she shook me for what she called my silliness. Ever after that I would leave the gallery when it began to grow dark.

On this afternoon I had been reading a long time, and when I grew tired of my book I went to the organ and began to play. Suddenly the door of one of the empty rooms opened, and Aunt Wendover came out. I would not have

been much more surprised if the high-ruffed lady had stepped down from her frame; for Aunt Wendover never came near that part of the house. She came toward me, and laying her hand on my shoulder, she said, "Agnes, you are not to touch the organ again. Remember."

I was afraid of her piercing, black eyes and her cold touch on my arm. She went back into the mysterious chamber and locked the door. I crept to the keyhole and listened, but I heard nothing except the rustling of papers and the opening and shutting of drawers.

I seemed determined to be in mischief that afternoon. A large picture entirely covered with crape hung in the gallery. All my life I had regarded it with wonder and awe, but I had never dared to touch it. That afternoon I mounted a chair and tugged at the crape covering. It was securely fastened, and I could not move it, though I succeeded in tipping my chair over, and the crash brought Aunt Wendover to the door. She must have seen at a glance that the picture had been disturbed, for she said, "Agnes, if you do not let things alone I shall forbid your coming here. Go and sit quietly in your room for two hours as a punishment for meddling."

I did not heed her words, but grasped hold

of her dress, and said, "O Aunt Wendover, won't you please tell me who is behind that crape? What does the picture look like?"

"The falsest, fairest face God ever made," she said as if forgetting my presence. But she suddenly seemed aware of it. She took me by the shoulder and thrust me into my own room, repeating her injunction to sit there for two hours.

I don't know how the time passed, for there were no books in the room, and I never had any playthings. I had never in my life owned a doll. My room was as bare as the other rooms in that wing. There was a little iron bedstead, a washstand, a chest of drawers holding the necessary articles of clothing that I possessed, one stiff chair, and a long, old-fashioned mirror. I had no inducement to look in this, for I was a plain, dark child, and I thought myself positively ugly. I looked from the window, but nothing was to be seen except water, for Wendover House stood on an island. I never liked the water, and I turned away from the window, and began to think I had more than usual to occupy my mind that day—what Aunt Wendover was doing in the empty room, why I must not touch the organ, what could be behind that craped picture—all these questions whirled through my brain. Then there were the usual

puzzles that troubled me. What was God like, and why had he made the world? For I knew that a mysterious being called God had made something called the world, and that Wendover Island was a part of it. Another question was, how did I get to the island, and how should I get away? When I grew to be old, as old as Aunt Wendover, should I stay there?

The time passed at last, and I saw by the tall clock in the corner that my two hours had expired. I ran to the library and looked for a book, for ever since I could remember I had been fond of reading, and it was my only pleasure. There were numberless volumes in the library, and no one had ever forbidden my touching them. I had read most of the books in bright covers, and I had looked over those that were illustrated, but there were thousands of dark, heavy books that I had no desire to touch. I took down a copy of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, which, by some freak of fancy, had a gay crimson binding. It had escaped my notice until then, and I promised myself a rare feast; but I soon put it back on its shelf, and took down an old favorite of mine, the Arabian Nights. I became so fascinated by the pictures it called up before me, that I forgot how cold the library was, and all the incidents of the afternoon slipped from my

mind, until the lessening light warned me to find refuge in Nurse Hillyer's room. It was a western room, much lighter than the library, and I read a few pages more till it grew too dark even for my young eyes to see. After that the events of the afternoon kept running through my mind, and I wanted to ask some questions. I was convinced that there was some mystery about the house, because many queer things happened. I resolved to find the key to some of the secrets, so when Nurse Hillyer laid her knitting down, I said,

"Nurse, why is Aunt Wendover so queer, and why won't she let me see the craped picture, and why are all the rooms shut up, and why won't she let me play on the organ?"

Nurse was used to my questions about my aunt's peculiarities, but when I mentioned them over she looked surprised. "Miss Agnes, surely you never touched the craped picture," she said.

"I only just touched it, nurse. I have always wanted to know what is behind the crape. What harm could it be if I knew? Can't you show it to me?"

"Miss Agnes, I wouldn't touch that picture for anything. Mind you never do it again! Miss Wendover has reason to be much displeased with you."

"But, nurse, do you know who is behind the crape?" I persisted. "Aunt Wendover says it is the falsest, fairest face God ever made."

Nurse seemed to be in a brown study. She sat with her lips pursed up, and her hands crossed on her lap. I grew tired of waiting, and I asked another question.

"Nurse Hillyer, why won't Aunt Wendover let me play on the organ?"

"O Miss Agnes, she didn't hear you do that, did she?" asked nurse sadly. "Never do it again, child. It vexes Miss Wendover."

"Oh dear!" I sighed. "I am so tired of being told to let things alone! I wish that I could live in a little house of only one room; I am so tired of big shut-up rooms where nobody but ghosts live." Nurse shook her head; but I went on, "There are ghosts in the world, for Hamlet saw one!"

Nurse looked puzzled. She evidently knew nothing of Hamlet; her reading was of a different kind from mine.

"Is there a ghost in Wendover House?" I asked, fearful of hearing her say there was one, and yet half hoping that there might be.

But nurse's patience was exhausted. She rose and rang the bell. "You ask too many questions, Miss Agnes. I am sure your aunt wouldn't like to have me answer them. Has

Miss Wendover had tea?" she asked of the maid who appeared at the door.

"No, but Miss Agnes is to have her tea with you."

"Very well, Barbara, you may bring it up," said nurse.

I knew that my aunt either had company, or that she was displeased with me; for at other times I would take my meals with her. Company came very seldom to Wendover House, and my aunt was very often displeased with me; so I concluded that the affair of the picture and the organ was the cause of my banishment. I was always glad of any reason for taking tea with nurse, for the solemn, stately meals in the great dining-room were a sad trial to me. I don't think I was a very awkward child, but in the presence of my aunt, I did everything wrong. I felt her eyes were on me, and in my confusion I dropped my bread, spilled my milk, and gulped my food in a way that drew down many a merited rebuke. Once, in my awkward misery, I dropped one of the precious china plates and broke it in a dozen pieces, and since that day I had eaten from a plate of common ware, taken from the servants' closet. Then Hawkins, the grim butler, who stood behind my aunt's chair, seemed to regard me with eyes that chilled my blood. I was even more afraid

of him than of Aunt Wendover. I think I did not eat enough to keep a bird alive, but I often got a lunch from Nurse Hillyer's store-room, and her apples and gingerbread were a great solace to me.

When I took my tea with nurse, she often allowed me to set the table and help her, and this evening I knelt on the hearth-rug making toast. . Then I carefully buttered it, and brought the teacups from the closet. After that, I reached down the keys of the store-room, and asked, "Nurse, don't you think we might have some jam to-night? It is such a dreary night, and strawberry jam is nice and comforting."

Nurse laughed as she singled out the particular key she wanted; for she was housekeeper, and all the stores were in her charge. She was accustomed to humor me, and I added, "And sponge cake, too, you know. I haven't had tea with you in three weeks, and Aunt Wendover never has sponge cake."

The sponge cake and the jam made their appearance, and we sat down to our tea. I enjoyed the cheerful little meal, for the logs crackled on the hearth, and I didn't mind the rain outside, when the lamps were lighted.

After Barbara cleared the table, I brought out my books and studied my lessons. Usually

I learned them in the drawing-room under my aunt's surveillance, but as she did not send for me I sat and swung my feet to and fro, a proceeding that would not have been tolerated in the drawing-room. I learned my tasks quickly, for when my aunt was not present I had no temptation to let my mind wander from my book, and besides, I was anxious to finish them so that I could talk to nurse. I conjugated my Latin verb and learned my geography and history, then, when I had piled my books upon the table, I drew my stool close to nurse and watched her knitting. I used to wonder what she did with all the stockings she knit, for she was constantly making them, and she could not wear them out. Besides, I knew they were much too large for her. Just then she was setting the heel, and I knew she would not talk while doing that. So I sat and watched the pictures in the flames till she was knitting as usual.

Then I asked abruptly, "Nurse Hillyer, who am I?"

"Agnes Wendover, of course," said nurse, quietly.

"Yes, I know, but I mean, where do I come from? The first thing I can remember is being four years old, and seeing Aunt Wendover look so sharply at me. Didn't something happen

before that? I must have begun somewhere. Was I ever anywhere else, Nurse Hillyer? Seems to me I haven't always been here where I can't know anything about myself. I hate dark closets and secrets and I hate not to know things. If I ask questions, you say, hush, and Aunt Wendover always makes me do more lessons. If I could only go back where I began, and then go on right!"

"What *do* you mean, Miss Agnes?"

"It seems to me I must have begun right. You say God made me, and he must have started me right, and then it seems that something happened that tangled things dreadfully. I can't tell just how, for my head aches when I try to think it out. It is harder than my Latin. Now, why did God let me get all wrong? Don't he care for people after he makes them?"

"Miss Agnes, what stuff you are talking!" said nurse, impatiently; "I can't understand you at all."

"Why, it is this. Why did I have to come to Aunt Wendover; did I belong to anyone else before she got me? Seems to me that I can just remember being some where else. I always thought that God didn't think any more about me after I came to Wendover House. He never comes here, I know, for Aunt Wen-

dover says she don't believe there is any God at all."

"Now, Miss Agnes," Nurse Hillyer began, but I interrupted her.

"I know she don't, for I heard her tell Dr. Barnham once that God had never troubled himself about her, and that she guessed there was none. She told the doctor that when he asked her to go to church and let me go to Sunday-school. She said there was no use in putting nonsense into my head, that I was silly enough already. But I am not silly, because I think a great many things," I added half to myself. "So that is what makes me think that God don't care for any one in Wendover House," I said, going back to the question that troubled me. "If I could get away I might find out about him. I don't know how God could find a little girl in a big, lonely house, and then, there's the water all around it. Have I always got to stay here, Nurse Hillyer?"

"I am sure I don't know, Miss Agnes, but you ought to be thankful for such a good home. I know that Miss Wendover would blame me for telling you, but I am sure it is no more than my duty. Miss Agnes, God is Everywhere! He knows everything you do or say, and he is watching you all the time, much sharper than Miss Wendover watches you. So you must be

very careful what you do, or some day when you tell stories to Miss Wendover, he will send some awful punishment on you. People have been struck dead for lying." She rolled up her stocking, and, looking significantly at the clock, said, "It is eight o'clock already, and you ought to be in bed this minute. What Miss Wendover would say to me, I am sure I don't know."

"Oh! nurse, couldn't I sit up ten minutes longer?" I begged. "It is so dark and still in my room, and just as soon as I shut my eyes I see all sorts of dreadful things. I could stand it better if I had a light. Something walks in the room under mine, and it talks and cries. I hear it almost every night."

"Nonsense, Miss Agnes! You must hear Miss Wendover moving about, and you imagine the rest. Come, come, your eyes are as big as moons. I did wrong to let you talk so much."

She took a lamp and led the way through a long hall, then through the gallery where my organ stood. Involuntarily I glanced at the wall where the draped picture had always hung, and it was gone; but the lady over the organ seemed gaily to shake her finger at me as I passed.

I think Nurse Hillyer would have liked to sit with me sometimes till I fell asleep, but Aunt

Wendover had forbidden it. So when I was tucked in bed nurse went away, carrying the light with her. And all at once the dark became peopled with fantastical shapes. I fancied I saw Satan as Milton had painted him, and as Dante had painted him; for I had read more or less of both Paradise Lost and the Divine Comedy. Besides these, satyrs and goblins passed before my eyes. The scratching of a mouse in the wall set my heart beating, for I imagined that some dreadful thing was about to spring on me. This night I had a new horror, for I felt that the eyes of God were searching me as Aunt Wendover's always did. Nurse Hillyer had said I never could get away from him, and I was afraid of the very thought of a being who could see me even in the dark. This was worse than any of my old terrors, and I felt that I never should fall asleep. Aunt Wendover had said that there was no God, and Nurse Hillyer said there was one, and an awful one. My ideas of God had been gleaned from the books I had read, principally from Milton. I do not think there was a Bible in the house, although Nurse Hillyer must have had one. I did not then even know of the existence of a Bible, though I had read many books far beyond my years.

The wind rose as the evening wore on, and I

could hear the waves beating against the rocks. I had no fear of the storm; I had worse terrors. I was so tired of the island and the dreary house, that I meant to escape some day. I did not know how I should do it, but I meant to reach the mainland where there were houses and churches. I knew they were churches, though I had no idea what they were for. I would run and run so far that Aunt Wendover's eyes could never spy me out. Now I could not go, for I could not escape God's eyes. Nurse said he never slept, and Aunt Wendover did sleep sometimes. I shuddered, and buried my face in the pillow, and after a while I fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

AGNES' STORY.

I HEAR a dear, familiar tone,
A loving hand clasps close my own,
And earth seems made for me alone.
—*Alice Cary.*

THE storm was over when I awoke next morning, and except a few broken branches of trees, left no trace behind.

I hoped that I should breakfast with nurse, but my aunt had left no such order; so I was forced to go down to the dining-room. Aunt Wendover sat behind the urn, looking more forbidding than ever, and she seemed to scan me from head to foot as I came in. Instinctively, I felt of my hair, to know if it was smooth, and looked to see if my apron was on straight. A lovely morning sun was shining, but the blinds were not opened, and the room had a musty smell that made me feel faint. I crumbled my bread in my milk, and ate a few spoonfuls, swallowing them with difficulty. My aunt seemed to eat even less than I, and she soon rose and left the room. Not one word

had she spoken to me except to reprove me for sitting on the edge of my chair. I knew she was angry with me for my meddling the day before, and I was glad to get off without any reference to the subject.

After breakfast I had nothing to do for two hours, for my governess, Miss Manning, never came until ten. I went over my lessons to make sure I knew them, then I read a while, and at last I went into the corridor. In spite of the knowledge that God's eyes were on me, I wanted to open the organ. I did not mean to play on it, but I wanted to see if it was locked as the piano was. Two or three times I laid my hand on the lid and took it away again, and when I mustered courage to try to raise the lid I found it locked. As I stood there, Barbara came up and told me that Miss Manning was waiting in the school-room. I sighed and turned away. Slowly I opened the door and sat down at my desk.

I always thought that Aunt Wendover engaged Miss Manning because she was so much like herself. She had the same spare, straight figure, the same keen, black eyes, and the same voice, sharp and shrill. Miss Manning, however, was not so severe as my aunt, and when I had good lessons, she was almost kind. I recited and studied till noon, when lunch was

served in the school-room. There were more lessons till two, when Miss Manning was rowed back to the mainland, and I was free again. This morning Miss Manning was quite gracious; I had recited my Latin perfectly, and she allowed me to talk more than usual. I asked her many questions about the city and the people who lived there, and she answered me till I asked, "Why won't Aunt Wendover let me go there? I am tired of this house!"

"Little girls should do as their elders tell them, and ask no questions," she replied. After that I could not make her talk any more, and we went back to our lessons.

After she left, I went to the wharf and watched her boat till it was but a tiny speck on the water. Hers was almost the only boat that ever came to the island. Once in a while a red-faced, gray-haired man, whom Nurse Hillyer said was Aunt Wendover's lawyer, came. Then I was sent out of the way while my aunt and Mr. Bishop were talking about something nurse called "business." Sometimes Dr. Barnham came, but not as often as I wished, for I liked him. He always spoke pleasantly to me, and sometimes gave me sugar-plums. But he scarcely looked at me when my aunt was present, for she never liked any one to notice me much. I used to watch the water and wish that

the doctor would come. I counted the time since he had last been at the island. It was only three weeks, and sometimes he did not come for months at a time. There was no use in watching for him, so I turned back to the house. I stood in front and scanned the windows for a friendly face, but no one was there save my aunt, who raised the drawing-room window and told me to come in, for the dew was falling.

Nothing happened to break the dull monotony of those days. I studied and read and dreamed as usual, and every day I grew more morbid. Nurse Hillyer was taken ill, and I was forbidden to go to her room. Dr. Barnham came and went, but it was when I was in the school-room, and I did not once see him. Winter was not far distant, and we had a long spell of rainy weather, so that I could not go out. My daily exercise was a walk on the piazza, and as my aunt usually sat in the drawing-room in sight, I did not enjoy myself much.

I often wondered why Aunt Wendover did not let me get sick and die, for she did not seem to care for me. I knew that people died, for I had read it in books, but I had little idea what death meant, except that I would go away from Aunt Wendover. I wonder now that I did not go crazy in those long days, for I had

no hope to keep my heart alive. I missed the organ so that I was driven to disobedience. Once when I examined the lock, I found that it was weak, and I got a knife from the kitchen and pried it open. I was so frightened at my success, that I did not dare play that day. But after that, when I knew that my aunt was busied in another part of the house, I used to play my favorite wail. I had an addition to it now, for life was more dull and barren than ever.

A couple of weeks later I heard the door-bell ring one day, and, hoping that it might be Dr. Barnham, I ran to the stairway. But the voice was not his, it sounded like Mr. Bishop's. Nurse Hillyer, who was around again, came and called me to her room, and I took my tea there that night.

When the door opened to admit Barbara, I heard a sound that I had never before heard in that house—a laugh, a light, happy laugh. It startled me, and I asked, "What is that?"

"I heard nothing," said nurse, and I turned to my books.

She said I was not to go down-stairs again that night, and she took me early to bed. I fell asleep wondering how anybody dared laugh in Wendover House.

Next morning as I stood at the head of the

stairs, my eyes fell upon some thing that I supposed was an apparition. The figure of a child, a fair boy of about my own age, stood before me. He was dressed like some pictures I had seen, in a black velvet dress and a broad lace collar, and long curls of yellow hair fell upon his shoulders. He came toward me smiling, and I was afraid of him, for I thought he was an angel. Just then the door of my aunt's room opened, and Miller, her maid, beckoned to the child. He ran away, turning his head to look at me. I had breakfast with nurse, and when I questioned her about the strange child, she merely shook her head. I could not make her speak.

I did not see my aunt for two days, though two or three times I caught a glimpse of the strange child. On the third day, as I sat in the library straining my eyes over my book, the door opened, and he came in.

"I've found you at last!" he cried, laughingly. "What made you hide away from me?" He came close to the sofa where I had curled up to keep warm, and looked at me. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Agnes," I said.

"Agnes? Is that all?"

"Agnes Wendover."

"My name is Paul Raymond. I have come

here to live, and I am so glad that there are more children in this big house."

"Are you really going to live here?" I asked eagerly, for already the long days seemed to brighten.

"Yes, are you glad? Do you like me? I like you, Agnes."

"I like you. I am glad you are here," I said simply. "But how did you get here?"

"I came over the dark water one evening with Mr. Bishop. Do you know Mr. Bishop? He is a real nice man, though I didn't like him much at first. We had a long travel before we came to the water, and I was very tired, though I am quite rested now. Nobody told me that I should find a little girl here? How old are you?"

"Nearly nine."

"Then you are older than I, for I am not much past seven. I am quite as tall as you, though. What are you reading?" and he stretched himself up till he could look at my book, "Fairy tales," he said. "I used to like them when I was littler, but I haven't read any lately. I haven't had any books to read for a long time. Do you do lessons, Agnes?"

"Every day," I said; "they are very hard."

"What do you study?"

I went over the list of my studies, and he

sighed. "Why, you are very clever. I don't know much, but I like to read. I am going to study, for Miss Wendover said so."

"Do you like Aunt Wendover?" I asked involuntarily.

"Yes. Don't you like her? She is very good, only now she is ill, and I don't see her much. Don't you like her, Agnes?" he persisted.

"She doesn't love me," I faltered, hardly daring to say that I didn't like her, for fear she would appear at the door. "Nobody loves me."

"I do, Agnes," said the child smiling. "I love everybody, and I mean to love you very much if nobody else loves you." He perched himself upon the arm of my sofa, and sat swinging his feet. "Why don't you come down-stairs?" he asked. "Don't you ever come?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes, but I like it better up here. I like anything better than the drawing-room."

"Why, I think it is a nice old room! It is about the prettiest room I ever saw. I think this is a dear old house, though it is not one bit like my other home."

"O Paul," I cried, "do tell me all about your life before you came here! I can't remember

anything but Aunt Wendover and this place with water all around it."

"I'll tell you everything," he said eagerly, "and we'll have real jolly times together, Agnes."

I smiled in sympathy with him, though I had no idea what jolly times were. Paul settled himself to begin his story, but just then Barbara came in.

"Miss Agnes, you are to come down to dinner to-night, Miss Wendover says," she announced. "O Master Paul, are you here? Come to Miller and have your hair brushed."

Barbara led him away, and as soon as the bell rang I went down to dinner. Aunt Wendover was already at the table, looking pale and ill. I felt sorry for her, and I wanted to tell her so, but I had not the courage. Presently Paul came in, and Aunt Wendover smiled the least little smile at the sight of him.

He went right to her, holding out his tiny hand. "Is your head better?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, thank you," she answered in a voice I seldom heard.

The meal progressed quietly. The child spoke occasionally, asking polite questions, and Aunt Wendover answered him as she had never answered me. He was very easy and polite,

and I was even more awkward and unfortunate than usual. Once I dropped my knife and won a sharp rebuke from my aunt. Paul looked up, as if surprised at her tone, and his eyes rested pleasantly on me.

After dinner I did not know what to do. I always went directly up-stairs after meals, but to-night I waited to see what the strange child would do.

He went to my aunt and asked, "Miss Wendover, please may Agnes stay and play with me?"

I was startled at the idea of my playing, but I listened intently to hear what Aunt Wendover would say.

"Why, yes, but she must not neglect her lessons. Where do you want to stay?"

"I'd like to sit in the library, if there could be a fire there. It is very cold in the library, Miss Wendover, and Agnes sat there reading. She ought always to have a fire, for she coughs."

"Does she?" and Aunt Wendover looked sharply at me. I was so afraid of her steady gaze, that I hid behind the curtain. "What do you want to do in the library?" she asked, after a moment.

"I want to talk to Agnes, and look at the books, please."

Miss Wendover rang the bell. "Hawkins," she said, "tell Barbara to make a fire in the library at once. I remember that it is Friday night, and Agnes has no lessons to prepare. You and she may sit in the library as soon as it is warm, but wait till Barbara calls you. Agnes, I hope I can trust you to keep out of mischief."

She went out, and Paul and I stood together a few minutes looking out of the window, watching the moon rise. Then he turned away and went into the next room, which was used as a reception-room, and then pushed on to the drawing-room. The piano seemed to attract his attention, and before I could say anything he pushed back the lid, and slipping on the stool, began to play. I was much frightened, but I listened with delight. Such a flood of melody as came from under those tiny hands! I had never before heard anything like it.

"Isn't that nice?" asked Paul, turning his happy face toward me. "Papa used to play that. Now I will play a piece he wrote himself, long before I was born."

And straightway he drifted off into the sweetest, saddest thing I have ever heard. "Play it again," I begged when he stopped, for I had forgotten my fear of Aunt Wendover.

But there was a sudden commotion behind us, and I looked to see all the servants standing at the door. I expected that Aunt Wendover would come and punish us in some dreadful way, and I dragged Paul away from the piano.

The library was warm by this time, Barbara said, and I was anxious to get Paul safely there, for I did not know what he might do next. There was a dark hall way to be passed through, and I trembled with fear as I reached the top of the stair.

"Paul, are you afraid?" I asked.

"No. Are you? Just take hold of my hand, Agnes," he said, feeling for mine, and we passed the dark hall in safety.

There was a bright wood fire burning in the library, and the lamps were lighted. I had never seen the room look so cheerful, for the fire crackled and glowed, and the flames cast their reflection on the dark furniture.

Paul drew two chairs before the fire, and we sat down. "What shall we play?" he asked, when Barbara had gone.

"I don't know how to play," I said. "Can you show me how?"

"Yes, of course; but it is so funny that anybody shouldn't know how to play! What did you do before I came?"

"Nothing but study and read. It was very lonely. Where do you sleep?" I asked, introducing a new subject.

"Right next to Miss Wendover's room."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"No. She comes and kisses me and cries over me when she thinks I am asleep. She loves me, I guess. I keep my eyes tight shut, and she never knows that I am awake."

"She never kissed me. Perhaps if she did I shouldn't be so afraid of her. No one ever kisses me; but Doctor Barnham pats my head sometimes when Aunt Wendover is not looking."

"I'll kiss you, Agnes," said Paul, and he bent his bright head and kissed me, for he was standing beside my chair.

I sat looking at the strange child who was not afraid of Aunt Wendover, and I asked abruptly, "Paul, are you afraid of God?"

"Why, no! Who ever heard of such a thing?"

"But Nurse Hillyer says that he is always watching us worse than Aunt Wendover does, and that he never sleeps."

"Of course he always watches us. Isn't that nice, Agnes? for then he always takes care of us, you know. He sees us all the time, and he hears us when we talk to him."

"O Paul! did you ever talk to him?" I asked in an awe-struck whisper.

"Always, every night and morning. That is praying, you know, Agnes."

"How do you know he hears you? Does he talk back to you?"

"No, but I feel good in here," said Paul, laying his hand on his heart.

"I never knew that God loves us," I said.

"Of course he does. Don't you understand, Agnes? God loves us just as our fathers do, only better. I 'member how my father used to hold me in his arms, and that is just the way God does. He holds us all, and his arms are so strong that he never gets tired."

"Do you like to have God watch you?" I asked.

"Yes, unless I am naughty. Then I don't, for he is sorry."

I sat looking into the fire and thinking, while the strange child roamed around the room, looking at the books and pictures. I felt strangely unlike myself, almost happy, and I watched him, half fearing that he would vanish like the people in my favorite fairy tales.

Presently he came and sat down by me, crossing his legs in an old-fashioned way. "Now, Agnes, tell me all about your life," he said.

And I, glad of a sympathetic listener, poured forth my story, telling him of the mysteries and secrets the house held.

"Paul," I said, when I had done, "do you know who has the falsest, fairest face God ever made?"

"Why, no," he said in surprise. And then I told him about the picture.

"But it doesn't hang there any more," I said; "Aunt Wendover had it moved, and I don't know where she put it. But now I have told my story, you tell yours."

So he began. "The first thing I 'member is of living in such a pretty little house with papa and mamma, oh! a great way from here! We had flowers and birds and a piano, and my papa always used to play, and my mamma would sing. Then mamma was taken sick, and one day she went away and never came back any more. I didn't see her go, but papa said she had gone to heaven to be with God. After that papa and I lived alone, and he was so very, very good to me, and he taught me to play. I always did it, but he showed me how to play better. He used to give lessons to lots of people, and they called him 'fessor. But by-and-by he was so sick that he couldn't play any more. Then some cross-looking men came and took away our piano, and lots of our pretty

things, and papa didn't stop them. He kept growing sicker and sicker, and there was so little in the house to eat! I tried to eat such a little bit, so as to leave more for papa, that I was hungry most all the time. Well, one day some men came with a wagon and took us away to a funny big house where people ate very plain food from tin plates. They were very queer people, Agnes, you can't think! Papa grew worse and worse till one day he told me that he was going away to a lovely home, but that he couldn't take me with him. He said that God wanted him, that he would be with mamma, and that by-and-by God would take me too if I was good. He said I must be patient and stay right there, and before long a kind lady would send for me and take good care of me. Then he kissed me lots of times, and we said good-by. When I woke up next morning he was gone, and I knew he had gone to God. I didn't cry much for him, for he told me not to, and besides, we oughtn't to cry when God takes people to make them happy. I stayed with the queer people, and they were very good to me. Then after a while Mr. Bishop came and bought me these nice clothes, and then we came here. And that is all I 'member, Agnes!"

"You have so much more than I have, Paul," I said sadly. "You have your pretty little

house, and your papa and mamma, and all the queer people in the funny house, and I have only Aunt Wendover, and the island with the water around it."

Paul looked at me with sympathy in his eyes. "I'll tell you, Agnes," he said, "you may have half of my story, and I will take half of yours. See, won't that be nice? You need keep only half your lonesome times, and I'll take half, you may have half my pleasant times for your own."

I did not see exactly how this plan was to be worked, but I was grateful to him for offering to share the burden of recollection with me.

CHAPTER III.

AGNES' STORY.

HAD I the grace to win the grace
Of childhood, loving, shy, apart;
The child should find a nearer place,
And teach me, resting on my heart.
—*George MacDonald.*

THE next day was Saturday. I learned my Monday's lessons in a few hours, and I had the rest of the day to myself. Paul and I were together all the time. Even while I studied, he sat beside the table, busied with a book he had brought from the library. After a while he put the book up and asked me to study aloud. I was learning my Latin lesson, and I conjugated the verb *amo*.

Paul looked surprised. "O Agnes, I don't understand it at all," he cried. "Do people live who talk such a funny language?"

"Not now, but a great many hundred years ago they did," I explained, feeling somewhat elated over my superior knowledge. "Don't you know about Romulus and Remus, and Nero, and Horatius at the bridge?"

Paul shook his head. "You must tell me all about them, Agnes. You know a great deal more than I do," he said humbly.

"But you can play beautifully," I said, feeling small enough when I remembered the night previous.

"Can't you play?" he asked. "Then I must teach you. It is very easy, and it is such fun."

"I can play a little on the old organ in the corridor. Aunt Wendover forbade me to touch it, and—don't you ever tell, Paul—I go there now when she don't hear me. Is it wrong?" I asked, anxious to know what the strange child would think of my disobedience.

"I don't think it quite nice, Agnes, to play if Miss Wendover doesn't like it. This is her house, you know, and all the things in it are hers. Mamma always told me that children should mind what older people told them."

"But how can it be wrong if she never knows it?" I asked, for, poor child, my moral sense was not very acute.

Paul shook his head despairingly. He saw that he could not make me understand.

"But must I never play the little organ again?" I asked. "I love it dearly."

"Let us ask Miss Wendover about it. Seems to me she must say yes, for everybody likes music."

"I should never dare ask her," I said, trembling at the thought, but half hoping she would not refuse Paul.

"She went right up-stairs after breakfast, and there were some questions I wanted to ask her," said Paul. "I'll ask her at luncheon if she don't look so ill. Are your lessons done, Agnes? Then let's go to the library."

I followed him there, and to my surprise, I found the curtains drawn, and a fire burning again. Altogether, the room looked brighter than the rooms at Wendover House were wont to look.

Paul was climbing up the steps as if in search of something. "What are you looking for?" I asked.

"Where are the poetry books, Agnes? Don't you like them? I like them better than any other books 'cept the Bible."

"What is the Bible, Paul?" I asked, for I had seen the name often in my reading.

"O Agnes Wendover! Don't you know?" Paul cried in astonishment. "Why, the Bible is God's book!"

"Did he write it?"

"No, he did not write it himself, but he told some good men what to write and they did it. That is where we find out about God, Agnes."

"I never knew anything about God, Paul."

"Poor Agnes," he said, in a tone of pity. "I will find a Bible, and you can read it for yourself." And he began to scan the shelves. After a long search he sat down again. "I can't find any," he said sighing. "I must ask Miss Wendover to get me one. I have some money to pay for it. I had a Bible, but when they packed my clothes to come away with Mr. Bishop they forgot it. But I dare say Miss Wendover will get me one, and then we will have such nice times reading. Do you know, some of the Bible seems just like poetry, and that makes me like it so? Do you ever make poetry, Agnes?"

"No," I said. "I never knew anybody who did. Do you?"

"I make it sometimes," said Paul modestly. "Of course it isn't so good as the poetry grown-up folks make, but it jingles just like theirs."

"O Paul! you are very clever," I said admiringly. "I can't do the things you can. I am very stupid; I can only study the things in books. Shall you recite to Miss Manning?"

"I don't know. Aren't you hungry, Agnes? I wonder if it isn't almost time for luncheon."

"Yes, but if you are hungry, Nurse Hillyer will give you a slice of ginger-bread. She often gives it to me. Come, let's ask her."

We found nurse in the store-room, and she answered our request by giving us each a slice of ginger bread and a red-cheeked apple. We sat down on a box to eat our lunch, and watched her as she looked over her stores.

"What lots of jam and preserves you have, Mrs. Hillyer," said Paul, looking around the room. "I like jam and jelly, but I don't like pickles. This is very nice ginger-bread, Mrs. Hillyer. At the place where Mr. Bishop found me we never had cake and preserves. We had almost nothing but bread and milk, and it was not like the milk Miss Wendover gives me to drink. This milk is nice and rich. It was such a queer place, and I am glad to be here in this nice house. I like it here very much." And Paul looked around contentedly, and swung his feet.

At luncheon Paul began, "Miss Wendover, will you get me a Bible?"

Aunt Wendover looked aghast, and Hawkins stood still, holding a plate between his napkined thumbs as the clear voice rang through the room.

"I have some money that Mr. Bishop gave me, and I wish you would take it and buy me a Bible. I wouldn't trouble you about it, only there don't seem to be any stores on the Island.

Agnes and I want a Bible very much, and we couldn't find any in the library."

A curious expression came over my aunt's face, and I waited to hear what she would say. But her closely shut lips did not open, so Paul began again.

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to lend me a Bible till I can get mine. Agnes and I want to read it this afternoon."

He looked at her, and smiled pleasantly. To my surprise she said, "I dare say Nurse Hillyer will loan you the book you want. You may ask her after lunch"

"Thank you, Miss Wendover, I will give you my money when you are ready to go to the store."

We got the Bible from Nurse Hillyer after some parley, but not till she made a short journey to my aunt's room. We spent the whole afternoon reading the book that was so strange and mysterious to me. I shall remember that afternoon as long as I live, for then I first heard about Christ and his mission, and I began to see that God was our Father, a being to be loved as well as feared. Paul read from the parts he called poetry, and as his sweet, childish voice read Psalm after Psalm, I listened enchanted, feeling that he had been sent to comfort me.

After dinner he fell asleep on the sofa in the drawing-room, and there Aunt Wendover found him when she came in on some errand. I was sitting on the rug, quietly thinking of all I had heard the last few hours, and she nearly stumbled over me before she saw me.

"Are you here, Agnes?" she exclaimed. "It is quite time that you were in bed. Where is Paul? I declare, the child has fallen asleep already. How careless of Miller; she should have put him to bed! Go right up-stairs and send her down. And mind, Agnes, that you go directly to bed. It is long after eight."

I picked myself up, and in so doing I knocked the tongs against the fender. The noise roused Paul, and he sat up, rubbing his eyes. All at once he laughed. "I didn't know where I was," he said. "I dreamed that I was at home, and that my mamma stood by me. How funny of me to fall asleep here!"

"It is time you were in bed," said Aunt Wendover. "Come, Agnes, don't stand there any longer."

I had waited to say good-night to Paul, but I hardly knew how to say it before Aunt Wendover. He spoke first, "Good-night, Agnes. She may kiss me good night, mayn't she, Miss Wendover?"

My aunt nodded, and we kissed each other.

I did not say good-night to Aunt Wendover, though, for the first time in my life, I felt that I wanted to do so.

Nurse Hillyer came to tuck me in my bed, and after she took the light away I lay there, quite happy, thinking of God, but not afraid of him as I usually was. I had forgotten to ask Paul how he prayed, but I resolved to ask him the first thing in the morning, and so I fell asleep.

Next day was Sunday. I never knew any special meaning to the day, but I knew that it came after Saturday, and Aunt Wendover did not make me learn any lessons on that day. Nurse Hillyer read all day and wore a black silk gown, but no one went to church.

When I went down to breakfast I found Paul already in the dining-room. I noticed at once that he had on the black velvet dress he had worn when he came to the Island.

"Good-morning, Agnes," he said. "Isn't this a pretty morning? I am so glad, because I want to go to church. I haven't been to church in ever so long."

"Nobody ever goes to church from here," I began. But I did not finish my sentence, for Aunt Wendover came in, and breakfast began.

"I am glad it is such a nice, sunny morning," Paul said to her, "for I want to go to church!

Do you go to church in one of those little boats, Miss Wendover? I saw such pretty little boats in the boathouse."

My aunt's face flushed slightly, and at last she said, "You will not go to church to-day, Paul. Try to amuse yourself at home."

Paul's face fell. "What shall I do?" he asked. "At home I always went with papa, and we had such nice times. But perhaps you are too ill to go to-day. I am sorry for you, Miss Wendover. Say, Miss Wendover, why don't I call you aunt as Agnes does? Would you mind if I did? My papa and mamma are dead, and I would feel more as if I had folks of my own if I called you aunt."

"You may call me aunt if you like," she replied, and I thought her voice trembled.

"Thank you, Aunt Wendover! I think that sounds very nice." He slipped from his chair and went to her side, for she had finished her breakfast. "I am sorry your head is so bad," he said. "Can't I bathe it as I used to bathe mamma's? Cologne water is very nice for heads when they ache. I used to put it on mamma's."

"I don't think it would help mine, Paul. I shall lie down and try to rest. You and Agnes may go out, but don't get into mischief, and tell Miller to see that you are well wrapped up.

The air is chilly, although it is a sunny morning."

"Shall we play?" I asked of Paul, as we walked down the stone steps out into the sunshine.

"Oh, no! we must never play on Sunday. That would be very wrong, Agnes. We can play every other day, but this is God's day, and we must read good books and sing and be good. I am sorry Aunt Wendover felt too ill to go to church to-day, for I wanted to hear the minister and the organ. Don't you love to hear the organ, Agnes?"

"I never heard it. Is it like my organ in the corridor?"

"No, the organs they have in churches are most as big as a little house. The one my papa used to play was very large, and it had big, big pipes. When he played I always thought of heaven. I mean to learn to play the organ just as soon as I am old enough."

"Paul, how do you pray?" I asked abruptly.

"Don't you know how, Agnes? It is the easiest thing in the world. It is just kneeling down and thanking God for things and telling him what you want. Then you say, amen; and you feel so good!"

"But what do you say when you pray?" I persisted. "I want to learn how. I wish you

would pray so I can hear you! Can you do it anywhere?"

"Of course! Let's kneel right down by this rock, and I'll pray out loud."

I dropped on my knees beside him, and listened while he said, "Dear God, we are glad this is such a nice day, and that we have so many nice things. Make us good children, and let us please thee every day. For Jesus' sake, amen.

"Do you see how easy it is?" he asked. "It is just as easy as talking to anybody, and God always hears us."

"How can he hear everybody when there are so many people in the world?"

"You see, Agnes, God is not like people. He can do many things that people can't do. That is the reason we pray to him. Isn't it nice?" He smiled at me till I smiled back, quite as happy as he was.

We stayed outside till Nurse Hillyer called us in, and then we read in the Bible and sang hymns. Aunt Wendover did not come downstairs again that day, and Paul and I lunched and dined alone. Paul chatted as easily as if we had been alone in the library, but my old fear of Hawkins was on me, and I said nothing, but listened to Paul.

It was during the following week that Paul

spoke to my aunt on the subject of music. He had been to the piano several times and found it locked, much to his disappointment.

"Aunt Wendover, may I please have the key of the piano? It is locked," he said.

"Hawkins," called Aunt Wendover, "who locked the piano?"

"I did, ma'am. Those were your orders."

"Never mind my orders," she said almost pettishly. "I told Barbara last week to leave it unlocked. See to it, Hawkins."

She turned again to her breakfast, and Paul ate his bread and milk in perfect content.

As she left the room, he said, "Thank you very much, Aunt Wendover, for letting the piano be unlocked. And please, may Agnes play too? She likes the little organ in the corridor so very much you know."

My aunt looked at me till I was confused, and I began to bite the corner of my apron. I would not have been suprised if she had ordered me to my room. I supposed it was for Paul's sake that she said, "I don't care, only she must not annoy anybody with her noise, and she must not neglect her lessons."

"When am I to begin lessons, Aunt Wendover? I think I should like to study with Agnes. She is very clever."

"Is she?" said my aunt grimly. "You shall begin to study before long."

I was perfectly happy after that. I had my little organ, I enjoyed Paul's companionship, and my thoughts were pleasant ones. I think I began to look happier. I know I did not turn away so quickly when I saw my face in the mirror. Agnes Wendover did not seem such a pitiful, hopeless little creature as usual. I do not remember that I ever laughed before Paul came, and now I often laughed in sympathy with him. The weather was fine, and we were out of doors nearly all the time after my lessons were done. Paul seemed even more content there than in the house, and we roamed all over the Island, making friends with the cows and the pretty little calf. The great dog Bruno, a huge mastiff that had always been my special terror, would follow Paul and lick his hands. And all the other dogs, for my aunt kept a number of fierce beasts, were favorites of his. He fed the chickens, the ducks, and the geese every day, and this occupation I usually shared. Then we would go in and sit down to our meals with ravenous young appetites.

I used to wake in the night and think that it all was a dream, that the merry child was merely a creature of fancy. Sometimes I wanted to creep to his room and assure myself that he

was really there, but I dared not go lest Aunt Wendover's quick ears should hear me. In the morning I would listen to hear his step in the hall and his merry laugh, for he was always laughing.

Aunt Wendover was quite kind to me now. No, not exactly kind, but she seemed to be more conscious of my presence, and I think she disliked me less than usual. I know I began to feel differently toward her. Sometimes I wished that I could go to her and speak as easily as Paul did, but I had not lost my old awe of her.

Soon after Paul came, though I had never noticed my clothes before, but Paul did, I saw how plain and dull they were. Once when Aunt Wendover had been ordering some new clothes for Paul, he said, "Aunt Wendover, why don't Agnes have some new clothes? She hasn't any pretty dresses, they are all brown and gray. I think she would look very nice in red dresses, for she has dark eyes and hair like my mamma, and she wore red a great deal. Can't Agnes have a pretty red dress, Aunt Wendover?" And he put his hand on her arm and looked up in her face.

"Would it please you if she had one?"

"Yes, and she needs some pretty ribbons for her hair. Agnes has very pretty hair, Aunt Wendover. Of course it doesn't curl, but it is

nice and shiny. I like black hair better than yellow. Aunt Wendover, don't you think I am too big to wear curls? I'm 'most seven and a half."

Aunt Wendover twisted one of the curls over her finger as he spoke, but she did not reply, and her look was an absent one. I never saw her caress him before, and I think she was vexed that she had so far forgotten herself. She rose abruptly, and busied herself about the secretary.

A few days later Nurse Hillyer called me to her room to be measured for a new dress. The dressmaker, a funny little woman with spectacles, was there. About twice each year she came, and measured me for the dull ginghams or merinoes I wore every day. This time, however, I hoped that there would be a change, though I saw nothing but the usual patterns, the linings, and the squatty pin-cushion Miss Finch always carried. But a few days later, when the dress was sent home, it proved to be a soft red cashmere, with a dainty frill of lace at the throat and wrists. Paul was delighted, and he drew me to the mirror where I could look at myself. I wore the dress down to dinner at his express command, and he actually asked my aunt, "Doesn't Agnes look nice, Aunt Wendover?"

Oh, how I hoped she would say something to show that she approved of me! But she only quoted the proverb:

"Handsome is that handsome does."

Paul said no more, though he patted my hand under the table-cloth. After dinner he offered to play for me, and I soon forgot my chagrin and disappointment because Aunt Wendover would say nothing kind to me.

CHAPTER IV.

NURSE HILLYER'S STORY.

It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.
Shakespeare.

SUCH a change as came over this house one day when that little boy of Paul Raymond's was brought here! For a long time I couldn't get used to hearing that child laugh. Agnes had never laughed, poor thing, and when she laughed with Paul it did not sound natural. I am glad he came, for we all were stiffening up, and the child seemed to bring a new atmosphere with him. He actually seemed to like Miss Wendover at once, and he called her Auntie Wendover. It seemed almost a strange thing that anyone should love my poor child. Of course I always loved her, but I knew her long years before her disappointment soured her. She was like other people then, loving and lovable.

Well, Miss Wendover has been good to me, I'll say that. I've had my share of trouble, and she has stood by me through it all. Not

that she once so much as said, "Martha, I am sorry for you," but when I needed a home she took me back and found something for me to do. When Agnes came, I took charge of her, so I'm Nurse Hillyer still, though I am housekeeper now. Well, I ought to know something about the Wendovers, for I have lived in the house since I was a girl of sixteen. That was before Miss Wendover was born, and I used to wait on her mother. Mrs. Wendover was a good woman, and I'll never forget her. She never treated me like a servant, and she used to teach me herself, so that I had a much better education than most people in my position.

This house was a very different place in Miss Alicia's young days! There was always some pleasure afoot, and as for company, there were boatsful of young people coming and going every day, and Alicia the gayest of the gay, the life of every party. She had a great many suitors, but she saw only Paul Raymond, little Paul's father. The years went on, and people wondered why she did not marry, but I did not wonder. I knew she would marry no one but Paul. And it was there that all the trouble began.

The Wendovers are a proud old family, and they all have dreadful tempers. People said that old Mr. Wendover's father was always

quarreling with his children; certainly Alicia's father was hard enough to his children. He and Mr. Robert, his only son, could never agree. One day when they had unusually high words, Mr. Robert went away in anger, and he never came back. The old man was worse than ever after that, for he loved his son in his own way. The trouble was, they were too much alike to get along in one house. Alicia took Mr. Robert's leaving very hard, for they were much to each other. They never heard from him till they got news of his death. He died of a fever off in Italy, and left a widow and a little girl—Agnes. He had married an Italian girl who had been his model, for Mr. Robert was an artist, and as crazy over pictures as Mr. Paul was over music. His wife died soon after him, and then Miss Wendover had the child brought home. Agnes was about three years old when she came to the Island, and for six years she never once left it.

Paul Raymond was about twenty-five when he fell in love with a girl he met somewhere on his travels. I never knew any of the particulars, but we all heard more or less of the trouble between Mr. Wendover and Paul, for when the old man fell into a rage he was more like a wild beast than a man. It seems that Paul had told him of his engagement, and Mr. Wendover—

who was very bad with the gout at the time—raged like a tiger, and told Paul that he wanted him to marry Alicia.

"Marry Alicia," Paul repeated in a bewildered way. "Why, I never thought of her except as a sister. I can't marry her, for I love another woman."

I was dusting the furniture in the next room, and I couldn't help hearing every word. Dear me! I'll never forget that morning.

Old Mr. Wendover fell into a kind of fit when he heard that, and Paul tried to support him. But he wouldn't allow Paul to touch him, and he called Alicia.

When Mr. Wendover got his breath again, he said to Alicia, "Look at him! He comes to me and tells me that he is going to be married, when he ought to marry you. Look at him and see if he can face you."

I don't know whether Alicia looked at him or not, though I am sure that Paul Raymond was not the man to cower before anybody, Wendover or not.

He said gently, "Alicia, there seems to be some misunderstanding. I tell the truth, I never thought of marriage with you, and I am very sorry——"

"A fine thing to tell her to her face," her father screamed, "when she has refused offer

after offer for you, poor beggar that you are. Why do you stand there? Leave the house before I have you put out."

"Go, Paul, your presence angers him," said Miss Alicia.

"Go," the old man hissed, "and never set foot on the Island again." And then he cursed Paul and his children after him. I can't write his words, they were too dreadful!

As for Paul, he only said, "May God forgive you, Uncle Hugh, as I do," and left the room.

Poor Mr. Paul, his face was as white as a ghost's when he came into the room where I was, "Good-bye, Martha," he said. "I am going away. You have been very kind to me, and I'll always remember you." He slipped a gold piece into my hand, and I had to put my apron to my eyes to wipe away the tears. And there was not a servant in the house that didn't feel sorry to see him go, for he had a winning way. Paul is like him in that.

Mr. Wendover had spasms all day, and between one of them he made Miss Alicia swear that she would never allow one cent of the Wendover money to go to Paul. It was a dreadful thing to do, but I suppose she thought she must, for the old man was half mad, and there was no telling what he might do.

Alicia never was the same from that day. I think she was sorry for the trouble, but what could she do with her father, poor old sinner! He nearly wore her out, and it was a wonder he lasted as long as he did. He forbade Paul's name to be mentioned, and every reminder of him was put away. Paul was very fond of music, and so was Miss Wendover, but from the day Mr. Paul left, till little Paul came, I never heard the sound of a piano in this house. Miss Wendover found out that Agnes used to drum on the little organ up-stairs, and she forbade her to touch it again. I knew that the child used to steal away and play after that, but I used to pretend that I didn't hear her, for I couldn't see that she was doing any harm.

Paul's coming changed Miss Wendover. The first evening he was here, what should he do but go into the drawing-room and play, just as if that was the proper thing to do in this house! The piano had been tuned the day before, for Miss Wendover keeps all her property in good repair. Barbara had neglected to lock it after the man went away, and so Paul could open it. I should never have dreamed that the child could play, such a little fellow as he was. But all at once I heard the piano, and such playing! It sounded as if Paul Raymond was

there himself instead of a child not eight years old. I left my room to see what was going on, and I met Miss Wendover coming up the stair. She turned white as death, and she sank down upon the landing, pressing her hand against her heart. I was much frightened, for I had heard Dr. Barnham say that she had heart disease, and I knew he feared any sudden excitement.

"It is nothing, Martha, nothing," she said, "only a slight faintness. It will pass away. You may give me your arm to my room, and I will lie down."

She leaned heavily on me, and I felt her tremble. She shut her door, but several times as I passed to make sure that she was safe, I heard her sobbing and talking to herself. No wonder she was so affected by the child's playing, for he played one of the pieces his father made himself, long before he left Wendover House! It was a great favorite of Miss Alicia's, and often I've heard them playing it together, he playing the violin and she the piano. Sometimes she would play the guitar and he the piano. She played the guitar very prettily, and she never looked better than when she did it. Miss Wendover was very handsome.

After that, little Paul played whenever he liked, and Miss Wendover grew to mind it less

and less. Perhaps the dear boy's music comforted her. When she thought no one saw her, she would take him in her arms and press him to her heart. She would go to look at him at night, as if fearful that he would be stolen from her, and if he had the least ailment, she was very much alarmed. All those years that Agnes had been here, she never received a caress. Agnes never touched her heart, but Paul did. I doubt if she ever loved her niece. Miss Wendover never forgave her brother for marrying where he did. Then Agnes was not a lovable child, but she never had the proper treatment. I could see that she improved after Paul came. She began to lose her frightened expression, and to look one in the face. Poor child, she must have led a lonely life here!

Agnes is all Wendover, the picture of Mr. Robert, except in size and manner; those she must take from her mother. She was a very nervous child, and she had some unpleasant ways. She would peep into closets, and open drawers when she thought no one was looking. Then if questioned she would lie to clear herself. I thought she got her deceit from her Italian blood, for the Wendovers wouldn't lie for their lives. Hot-blooded and passionate they may have been, but they worshipped truth

and honest dealing. After Paul came, I began to notice Agnes' failing less and less, and she soon seemed as truthful as any child need be.

Miss Wendover was very indulgent to Paul. Agnes never had a plaything, but Paul had such a lot of toys that I did not know but what Miss Wendover was going crazy. Agnes, too, got many privileges through him, for he wouldn't have a thing unless she shared it.

Agnes always coughed a great deal during the fall and winter, and she coughed very hard then. One day her aunt heard her coughing in the hall, and she told her to go right to me and get some cough syrup. A year before she wouldn't have noticed that Agnes was ailing. It did me good to see her notice the poor orphan a little.

I really can't think what would have become of Agnes if Paul had not come. I never saw two children so fond of each other as they were, and they were always together. They used to have a great way of sitting on the stairs telling stories in the twilight. They must have made them up, for I used to listen, and they told things that I knew never happened to either of them. Sometimes I wondered if they wouldn't get a habit of telling falsehoods, but it wasn't my business to interfere. I am sure I often wished to teach Agnes the right, but Miss

Wendover positively forbade me to talk religion to her, and I did not dare disobey her so directly. Miss Wendover pretended to have no belief in anything of the kind, and she said that Agnes should not be deceived as she had been. She used to be very different, but after her disappointment she seemed changed in every way.

Paul was strangely religious for a child. He used to talk a great deal to Agnes about God and the Bible, for she was as ignorant of such things as a little heathen, and I think it worried Paul.

I used to wonder what Miss Wendover would do with Paul; whether she would try to teach him her unbelief, or let him go on as he had begun. I soon saw that she meant to say nothing to stop him. She gave him a Bible when he asked for it, and she said nothing against his praying. Once she said to me, "Martha, you need say nothing to Paul against his praying. It won't hurt a child to believe in such things. I guess it don't make much difference either way," she added. As if I wanted to stop him praying! I wondered if she had heard the sweet childish voice saying, "God bless Auntie Wendover, and make me deserve her goodness to me." It was a strange sight, Hawkins told me, to see him fold

his little hands and ask a silent blessing on his food. The first time he did it Miss Wendover looked surprised, but the next time she signed to Hawkins to wait till Paul had finished his grace.

One Saturday morning Miss Wendover came to me and said, "Martha, you will have to go to church with Paul. I have put him off for several Sundays, and I can't make excuses any longer. I don't want him to know that I do not believe in those things, but I can't go to church, nor do I want to. If you don't mind, I want you to go with him to-morrow. John can row you over."

I was willing to go, and I asked her if I should take Agnes too. Her face clouded. "No," she said, "she has never been accustomed to going, but with Paul it is different."

Paul came down next morning, all dressed in his best, and Agnes, too, had on her new frock. I think she expected to go with us, and Paul never dreamed that she was to stay at home. I dreaded the poor child's disappointment. Directly after breakfast Paul ran for his hat and overcoat.

"Why, Agnes, are you not ready yet?" he said when he came back.

Agnes looked at her aunt, who said, "Agnes is not going."

"Why not, please, Aunt Wendover?" said Paul.

"She has not proper clothes, for one reason."

"Why hasn't she got them? I have such nice things, and Agnes ought to have them too."

"She has had no need of bonnets and cloaks," said Miss Wendover, quailing a little before Paul's honest eyes.

"I am so disappointed, Aunt Wendover, because I wanted her to hear the big organ. But perhaps you will buy her some new things so she can go next Sunday. Will you?"

Paul laid his hand on hers and patted it gently. I wondered what she would say to him, and as for Agnes, she turned away to hide her tears.

"Really, Aunt Wendover, Agnes ought to have a nice hat and cloak, much nicer than those she wears to play in. And she needs some pretty gloves and a muff like other little girls. Oh, I know how they look; I used to see them when I went to church with papa. There is John in the boat! It must be time to go. Please say yes, Aunt Wendover, and then I can tell Agnes that she may go next Sunday. Perhaps you will feel well enough to go with us then."

Miss Wendover changed color. "I hardly think so, but Agnes may go if she likes," she

said. "John is waiting, Hillyer," she added in her usual tone.

It was the first time I had been to church in ten years, for I had grown in the habit of staying at home to please Miss Wendover. I thought I could read my Bible and keep Sunday at home; but I did wrong, and I saw it after Paul made me go.

Paul chattered all the way there and back, and I suppose he told Miss Wendover all about the service. She was in a hard place, and I couldn't see just how she was going to get along with Paul. He would soon find out the truth, I knew; though he thought then, poor innocent, that she stayed from church because she was ill. As if Alicia Wendover had darkened a church-door for eleven years! She always used to go with the other Paul when she was a girl. Mr. Wendover didn't like to have them go, but Paul would go. He was a real Christian, though I used to think that he wasn't serious enough about some things. But that may have been his way. We all have our ways.

Agnes had the promise of a new hat and pelisse, and permission to go with us next Sunday. This was a great concession for her aunt to make.

CHAPTER V.

AGNES' STORY.

THE same world wears a different aspect as the conditions of life vary.—*E. P. Roe.*

I SHALL never forget the first time I ever went to church. I was in a state of great excitement all the previous week, and I know that I was unusually obedient. I trembled lest my aunt should revoke her consent, and each time she looked at me during the week, I expected to hear her say, "Agnes, you may stay at home on Sunday." Perhaps she would have said so, but for Paul.

I kept wondering where my hat and cloak were coming from, and as Saturday morning dawned, and I heard nothing of them, I began to lose all hope. Paul found me standing in the window, tracing pictures on the glass with my fingers and looking very disconsolate. He was all sympathy at once, and he asked what was troubling me. I told him, and added, "I wouldn't mind going in my old things, but Aunt Wendover won't let me, for she said they are not decent. I know she has either forgot-

ten, or changed her mind, and I may as well give up going."

Paul's face wore a look of dismay. "Dear me, Agnes, what a pity you are not a boy, then you could have half of my clothes. I have a great many more than I need. But I guess Aunt Wendover will 'member her promise, but I shall go straight and 'mind her of it."

"It won't do any good now, Paul," I said, despairingly, "for Miss Finch couldn't make my cloak."

"Aunt Wendover might buy it all made. Mr. Bishop bought some of my things in that way, because he was in a hurry. Come with me, Agnes, and we'll see about it."

He dragged me to my aunt's door, and rapped courageously.

"Who is there?" called Aunt Wendover, in no very propitious tone.

"It's Paul, Aunt Wendover. Please may I come in?" he said, as if he knew his name was the "open sesame" that could unlock that door.

The key turned in the lock, and Aunt Wendover spoke more graciously. "Come on, then."

Paul went right to her, and putting his hand on her shoulder, began, "Aunt Wendover, I thought I would come and speak to you about

Agnes' things. To-day is Saturday, and to-morrow will be Sunday, you know."

"Humph! What do you want her to have?"

"Oh, lots of things! She needs a great many, I think. Why don't she have as nice clothes as I do?" Aunt Wendover made no reply, and Paul went on, "You can get her things yet, because they keep clothes all made in stores, and you have John and lots of boats."

I peeped through the crack of the door to see how my aunt was taking all this. She was busied with her writing, and she seemed not to notice the little hand that rested on her shoulder. Paul sighed at last, as she did not stop writing.

"Well, Paul, what do you want me to do? This is your own idea, and I expect to be instructed."

"Aunt Wendover, you have lots of money, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have enough. Why?"

"If I were a grown-up woman with a great deal of money, I would take Agnes to the city and buy her a hat and cloak, so that she could go to church."

"Well, you shall have your way. Send Hillyer to me."

Paul skipped away on his errand, and he presently returned, followed by nurse.

"Hillyer, I want you to take the children to the city this afternoon, for Paul wants Agnes to be fitted out with clothes. Let them suit themselves. I suppose Paul knows what is proper, if Agnes does not. Come to me for money when you go."

She turned again to her desk, and Paul and I scampered away, too happy to contain ourselves. It was the first time that I had left the Island, and I was so terrified by the rocking of the little boat that I should have cried if Paul had not assured me that there was no danger.

When we reached the stores, Paul took the lead. Mounted on a stool, he tossed over the cloaks on the counter till he found one that suited him, and he told me to try it on. It was a dark gray cloth, trimmed with fur, and lined with cherry-colored satin. It was a perfect fit, and Paul gravely told the clerk to do it up. Next he ransacked the milliner's for the hat he wanted, and we decided on a broad gray felt with a scarlet wing. Some gray gloves were added, and a muff to match the fur on my cloak, then we were ready to go.

On the way home, Paul stopped before a florist's window. "I want to buy some flowers for Aunt Wendover," he said. "I shall see if the flower man has any heliotrope. It is so sweet that I like it best of all flowers."

He entered the shop and gave his order with great dignity, and I admired his self-possession. When the flowers were done up, nurse took out her purse to pay for them, but Paul said; "No, thank you, nurse, I have some money," and he felt in the pocket of his skirt for the coins.

"Aunt Wendover, I have a present for you," he announced, as he reached the house.

"A present for me?" said my aunt.

"Yes. Do you like heliotrope?" and he proudly displayed the luxuriant bunch he held.

"Yes, I used to be very fond of it. So you spent all your money for something for me, did you?"

Paul laughed gleefully as Aunt Wendover smelled the flowers, and she really did seem pleased.

"You ought to have a vase to put them in, Aunt Wendover. There is a pretty white vase on the parlor mantel. May I get it?"

Aunt Wendover nodded, and Paul brought the vase and arranged the flowers in it.

"There!" he said, standing at a distance to survey his work; "I think they look very nice. I shall set the vase by your plate, Aunt Wendover, and you can see the flowers while you eat."

"Thank you, Paul. What did you buy for yourself?"

"Nothing. I didn't want anything. Don't you want to see Agnes' new things, Aunt Wendover? You can't think how pretty they are."

"No, I don't care about seeing them now, but I am glad you are pleased, Paul," she said.

I missed the little jar of heliotrope, and I wondered what had become of it. But, on passing my Aunt's room next day, I saw it on her dressing-table. I was glad to see that she appreciated them, and I told Paul where they were.

I was arrayed in my new clothes that morning, and for the first time in my life I felt a little pleasure in looking in the mirror. When I was ready, Paul expressed his approval of me. Then he said, "Agnes, you ought to thank Aunt Wendover."

"O Paul I can't, I really can't. Won't you do it for me?" I pleaded.

"I did thank her, but that won't do. You should thank her yourself. Come now, before Nurse Hillyer is ready."

He took my hand, and I followed him. Straight to my aunt's room he went, and said, "Aunt Wendover, here is Agnes with her new things on. Don't you think they are pretty?"

"What do I know about finery?" she said, putting on her glasses. "Yes, I dare say they will do very well. I hope that Agnes will behave herself in church."

"Now, Agnes," Paul whispered, giving me a gentle nudge.

"Thank you for buying my clothes," I said, awkwardly.

"Hey?" said Aunt Wendover. "What did you say?" for I had spoken so low that she could not hear me. "Is the child tongue-tied?" she asked, as I scraped the carpet with the toe of my shoe, not daring to repeat my words.

But Paul came to my rescue. "Agnes said she thanked you for buying her clothes," he explained.

"I suppose you told her to say that, for I never knew her to thank me for anything before."

"Perhaps it was because she is afraid of you, Aunt Wendover. Agnes is not ungrateful, she truly isn't."

"Much you know about ingratitude! So Agnes is afraid of me, hey? I suppose you children think that I am an old ogress who is fattening you to eat. Is that what you talk about when you sit on the stairs? Are you

afraid of me? Own up now." And she looked sharply at Paul.

"No, ma'am, I am not, because you are very good to me. But if I were in Agnes' place, I think I should be afraid of you, just a little bit, you know," said Paul, determined to speak the truth, yet not to offend.

"Well, you may assure Agnes that I shall not eat her," my aunt said grimly. "Nurse Hillyer is calling you."

It was time to go, and we scampered off to the wharf, where we found Nurse Hillyer waiting in her best black silk and Paisley shawl.

It was a clear, crisp day in the late autumn, and Paul was nearly beside himself with enjoyment. The most perfect day in mid-summer could not have charmed him more. He kept pointing everything out to me. "There, Agnes, that is the church spire," he would say, or, "how pretty the bells sound upon the water! I think Sunday morning is the nicest morning in the week!"

I was struck with awe as we walked up the broad aisle. I kept fast hold of Paul's hand, and wondered how he could look so cool and collected. He smiled and bowed to some one in the pew just across the aisle, and I looked and saw Dr. Barnham. Beside him sat a

very pretty lady, and I wondered who she was.

But then the organ began to peal out, and I listened intently. "Isn't it lovely?" Paul whispered, and I nodded, for I dared not whisper. The whole service was so new and strange to me, that I wanted to cry with fear or delight, I hardly knew which. The singing pleased me, and to my wonder, Paul sang with the others. The reading was from a chapter I had often read with Paul, but the prayer puzzled me. It was the first time I had heard any one pray before an audience. And then came the sermon, and I didn't know whether that was addressed to God or to the congregation. I asked Paul about it as soon as we left the church, and he explained all to me.

"When the minister preaches a sermon, that is to tell us what to do, and when he prays, he talks to God about us, and tells him what we need. Isn't church a nice place, Agnes?"

"Yes," I assented, "but I was almost afraid: I felt as if God was there."

"He was, but we couldn't see him. He always is where people pray to him and sing hymns about him."

All this was said as we threaded our way through the streets thronged with worshippers. When we reached the wharf we found John

waiting for us, and we were swiftly rowed homeward. I sat musing over all that I had heard, and Paul softly sang the closing hymn, beginning, "Lord of the morning, at whose voice."

That afternoon when Paul and I had taken the Bible and gone down to the shore, he asked, "Agnes, why does Aunt Wendover never go to church?"

"I guess she don't believe in God," I said. But Paul looked so horror-stricken, that I was sorry I had told him, and I hastily added, "you know she never goes anywhere. I've lived on the Island for six years, and I don't remember her going anywhere, only a very few times, when she went to see Mr. Bishop. Miller buys all her clothes, I guess, and when she wants anything, she sends for Dr. Barnham.

"O Paul," I broke off, "who is that pretty woman who sat next to Dr. Barnham? She had such pretty hair, and a nice little bonnet!"

"She is his wife, I guess," said Paul. "I shall ask him when I see him. I never saw her in church before; but I have been only twice."

"I didn't know Dr. Barnham had a wife," I said.

"Why, everybody has a wife but Hawkins. I mean to be married myself when I am a man."

"Shall you?" I said. "Aunt Wendover isn't married, is she?"

"Of course not, for she is Miss Wendover," said Paul.

"Whom shall you marry when you are a man, Paul?"

"I think I shall marry you, Agnes," he replied very gravely. "I like you better than any one else."

"Oh!" I said, quite flattered by his preference. "But I shall never be pretty like Dr. Barnham's wife. I shall be ugly, like Aunt Wendover, for I look like her now."

"Aunt Wendover is not ugly, Agnes. She is wrinkled, and her hair is gray; but I think she looks very nice."

"Humph!"

We both started at this exclamation, and turned to see Aunt Wendover standing behind us. She had come there unknown to us, and overheard our conversation.

"So you think I look very nice, do you, Paul?"

"Yes ma'am, if you wouldn't look so sharp sometimes," said Paul, with a little tremor in his voice.

"So I look sharp, do I? Agnes, here, thinks I am ugly. Don't you, Agnes?"

I felt like crawling under one of the rocks, but I answered feebly, "Yes ma'am."

"Good!" I always like to see candor. My mirror tells the same, so you must be right. The weather has changed, and a storm is coming up. Paul, you must come in, your chest is delicate, and you might catch cold."

She turned toward the house, and Paul ran after her. He took her hand, and they walked together. I followed slowly, hanging my head, for I felt that I had sealed my doom by my own words.

But to do my aunt justice, I don't think she disliked me for my comments on her looks. At any rate, I was glad that I managed to tell the truth that Sunday. For I know she hated nothing as she hated deceit. I had always been charged with telling falsehoods, and sometimes when in a close place, I would deny something that I had done. I had never been told the enormity of my sin; I thought it a very good way of escaping punishment. After Paul came, I tried to be truthful, and I confessed my faults, at the risk of being punished.

Oh! how hard those days were before Paul came to the Island! Was it any wonder that I counted myself rich in the love and companionship of this loving child?

CHAPTER VI.

DR. BARNHAM'S STORY.

BACK on herself her serpent-pride had curled.
—*Tennyson.*

I DID not go to Wendover House for some time after little Paul went there. I knew that Miss Wendover had undergone a great deal, and I thought she would rather have me stay away till some of the strangeness had worn off. But I was anxious to see the child, for his father was a dear old friend of mine. So I was glad when one day Miss Wendover sent for me. Paul had a slight cold, and she was alarmed about him. She idolized the child already. I could see that, though she tried hard to look unconcerned. I had known her so long, cold, hard, and unfeeling, that it seemed strange to see her sit there with her arms about a child.

In reality, Paul was not ill at all, but I did not dare to make too light of his case, or Miss Wendover would have thought that I was not sufficiently serious. He was not a robust child by any means, I saw that at once; but I did not suggest such a thing to Miss Wendover.

Paul's father died of consumption, and I thought that the child might have inherited it. Then I remembered that the father had not an even chance. I hoped that the boy would grow to manhood, for I foresaw that he would be a blessing to Miss Wendover. She had seemed turned to stone; but she appeared different already. In reality, there seemed to be a general waking-up in the old house. All its inmates were unlike those of any other household that I ever saw. If Miss Wendover knew of any person who was bitter enough against the whole human race, that person was sure to be engaged as her servant. Hawkins, the butler, was a misanthrope; Miller, Miss Wendover's maid, had a lover who jilted her, and she hates all his sex; Nurse Hillyer had a worthless husband, and after a few years of misery, she came back to the island, and Miss Wendover made her useful. Barbara was a sour-faced damsel, who was obliged to support an inebriate father with her earnings. I never knew anything of the history of the cook and gardener, though I imagine they must have had a grievance, or they could not have remained so long in Miss Wendover's good graces. Well, it was a strange, strange house!

The best part of Paul's coming was the change in Agnes. Poor little waif! I was

sorry for her all those years penned up in that gloomy house, like "Marianna in her moated grange!" She had a pitiful, frightened expression, as if she had been scared once, and had never got over it. Miss Wendover was not fit to bring up a child. I suppose she thought she was doing her duty by Agnes if she clothed, fed, and educated her. She never seemed to think that the child needed petting. My wife and I used to wish that we could adopt her and bring her up in a different atmosphere. I once ventured to ask Miss Wendover for her, but she refused very stiffly.

It would seem that I had some claim on Agnes for her father's sake, for I loved Robert Wendover, despite his haughty spirit that made him unbearable to most people. He, Paul Raymond, and I, were almost inseparable until Robert left, which broke up the trio. After that Paul and I were more than ever to each other till the trouble happened between him and old Mr. Wendover. Poor Paul! I could weep even now over his sad story! He was so gifted, so handsome, and so fitted to make a success of life, that I can not see why it disappointed him so cruelly. However, we cannot always tell success from failure. Perhaps his life will be a success when seen in the light of eternity, while many a life that the world pro-

nounces a brilliant success may be but a miserable failure. At any rate, he walked in his integrity, and died a Christian.

I know very little of Paul's history after he left Wendover Island, for our correspondence was irregular, and I never saw him again. He never wrote a word of complaint, but the little I have been able to gather from the child's talk is enough to tell me of hardship and struggle. I feel sure that he died in an almshouse, Paul Raymond! And all the time Alicia Wendover had more wealth than she knew how to use. Ah, well! I do not envy her the thoughts she must have had during those long years. It seemed that all the good in her nature vanished, and all the evil came to the front. Surely, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." She was not scorned, but she thought she was, and that is what worked the evil. It seems so strange that because she was disappointed in one thing, she should turn into such a miserable, misanthropic woman. I think it only reasonable that when we lose what seems best in our lives, we should make the most of the blessings we have left, and not persistently shut our eyes to them, as she did. I don't see how she managed to exist in the lonely life she led. She saw nobody, she went nowhere, she had almost no intercourse with the outside world. Robert's

mésalliance and death, and her own disappointment, seemed to change her into something without feeling. It was just about eleven years from the time Paul left till his child came there. Alicia was only thirty-six at the time little Paul came, but one would have thought her full twenty years older. Such a mark do selfishness and hatred leave upon the face of one who harbors them.

I never could understand why she felt so bitterly toward Paul. Of course, it was an unfortunate mistake, but it was none the less a mistake. It was not any wonder that she loved him, brought up together as they were. For Paul was old Mr. Wendover's ward, and he had lived on the Island from a little child. The old gentleman had the match between Alicia and Paul planned for years, and when Robert left, he disinherited him, and made a new will leaving his fortune to Paul and Alicia if they married.

We, Paul and I, for a while pitched our tent in a pretty little Kentish town, for Paul was doing some sketching near by. It was there that he met Muriel Dare, and from the very first I knew that Alicia Wendover's hopes were groundless. Paul was a careless, improvident fellow, and, indeed, he had no need to be otherwise; for Mr. Wendover had always allowed him more

than he could spend. Paul had only the merest trifle of a fortune of his own, but his guardian had been as generous with him as with his own son; more generous, in fact, for he was wont to grumble at Robert's extravagance. I noticed that soon after Paul met Muriel Dare, he talked of beginning life seriously. I knew what was in his mind, and I was sure that he was in earnest. We went home soon after, and he began to talk of making music a profession, but Mr. Wendover frowned on the idea. He wanted Paul to content himself on the Island, and be a gentleman of leisure. But Paul could not be contented, and the truth came out. He wanted to find a way to make a living, and then he meant to be married. I suppose there was a terrible scene then. He came to bid me goodbye, and he said he was going to seek his fortune. It was a sad parting, for we loved each other tenderly. I told him that I would not say farewell, but *Auf Wiedersehen.** He shook his head, and I think he had forebodings that we were parting for the last time. Still, to please me, he repeated *Auf Wiedersehen*, as we shook hands, and then he turned away, looking back to wave his cap to me. I never saw him again.

After that, Mr. Wendover failed every day.

* Until we meet again.

He grew even more irritable and unreasonable than ever, and it was a dog's life that Alicia led with him. He would allow no one else to wait on him, and he wanted her constantly with him. Even she could do nothing to suit him, though she was a very patient and faithful nurse. She felt bitterly toward Paul, poor girl; but her father poisoned her mind. Paul's own little patrimony must have been exhausted long before he died, for his last days were spent in extreme poverty. I would have shared my last crust with him had I known of his need.

I used to attend old Mr. Wendover after my father died, for I succeeded to his practice. So I saw a good deal of Alicia till her father died. After that I saw her but seldom, twice a year, perhaps; for I never went to the Island unless she sent for me. We never met in a social way after Paul left, though up to that time, I was a very frequent guest at the house, and Alicia and I were the best of friends. When I married, she took no notice of the event; she never so much as congratulated me the next time I met her. My wife knew something of her, and she was curious to see her. She used to ask after my enchanted princess when I came from the Island; for that was a name she had for the mysterious lady. Sometimes she declared with Betsey Prig, that there was "no sich a person,"

but that I had talked about her so long that I believed it myself.

Occasionally some adventurous people who had known Miss Wendover well, would put on a bold front and attempt to make a call. But all in vain. Either they were told by the solemn-faced Hawkins that Miss Wendover received no visitors, or else the lady of the manor herself met them, and appeared so frigid that they were glad to get away.

Our pastor himself went, but he had no better success than others. He felt like the leader of a forlorn hope, but he thought he had a duty to do. He meant to ask Miss Wendover to allow Agnes to come to church, even if she would not come herself. I met him soon after, and asked him about his visit. He shook his head. "I fear nothing can be done with that woman, doctor," said he. "She is a hopeless case it seems ; but I am sorry for the child. It seems that some one ought to take her away. What a life she must lead ! I felt as if I were in prison during the few moments I was in the house."

For Agnes' sake I used to wish that I had occasion to go to the Island oftener. She used to watch for my visits, and she seemed happy when I talked to her. I always loved children, and I would have liked to pet her, only I feared

that her aunt would be sterner than ever, to pay for it. My wife used to get very indignant over Agnes' wrongs, and she wanted to do something for her. She dressed a doll and sent it over by me. Agnes was in the school-room, so I was obliged to leave it with Miss Wendover, and I am quite certain that Agnes never received it.

I went to the Island one day in answer to Miss Wendover's summons. I found her waiting for me, and without one word she handed me a letter that she held. It was from Paul Raymond. He was dying, and he asked her to take the child.

"Well," I said as I gave back the letter, "what are you going to do about it?"

"There is only one thing to be done. The child must come here. It seems that I am forced to keep an orphan asylum. First I was obliged to send for Agnes, and now for this child."

"I have offered to relieve you of Agnes," I said.

"No, I will bring her up myself; I know the training she needs; you would spoil her. I sent for you to ask you if you would go and bring the child here. I can't leave myself, and I feel too old to undertake a journey now."

"Old!" I laughed, "I call myself no more

than middle-aged, and I am older by some years than you."

"That is nothing to the point. I suppose I know how I feel! Can you go? You are the best friend I have. I would not send every one on such an errand."

"I would like to oblige you, but my wife is ill, and I can't think of leaving her. Send Bishop," I suggested.

"I tell you, I would rather trust you; but, of course, I can't force you to go. Go to Bishop yourself; tell him as much as you think necessary, and send him on at once. I need not see him first. He has a close enough tongue, I guess, but you may as well give him a hint." She went to the secretary, took out a roll of bills, and gave them to me, saying, "Give this money to Mr. Bishop, and tell him to see that the child is suitably dressed before he brings him here."

She rose as if to terminate the interview. I did her errand to Bishop, and the next morning he set out.

As I said, I did not see the child except at church for some time after he came to the Island. For he did go to church, and so did Agnes. The curly-headed boy effected what the gray-haired divine could not bring about. I fear that a good portion of the congregation

forgot themselves and stared in wonder as Nurse Hillyer walked up the aisle, followed by those two children. They were a striking looking pair. Paul, a beautiful blonde, was dressed in a picturesque suit of black velvet, with his light curls hanging over his shoulders, and such a reverent look on his face. Agnes was his exact opposite. She looked like a little gipsy in her red and gray suit and her broad hat. I was surprised at the sight of them, and my wife fell in love with them at once. Agnes appeared like a cat in a strange garret, but Paul was perfectly at home. He opened his book and joined in the hymn.

Poor little Agnes! I believe if Paul had not come, she would have died from sheer loneliness. Besides, she studied too hard, her brain was overworked. Ever since she was old enough to read, Miss Wendover had left her lessons in charge of Miss Manning. I had pitied Agnes all those years, and I wondered if Miss Wendover would place Paul in Miss Manning's hands. So I was glad when she asked my advice about a suitable teacher for Paul, and I recommended a cousin of mine by the name of Arthur Grey. He was about nineteen years old, and in poor health. The foolish fellow had almost killed himself studying, and he was obliged to leave college for awhile.

I did my duty in regard to Agnes. I told her aunt that Miss Manning's cramming process was injuring the child, and I warned her to follow a different plan in the future. Agnes had been crowded ahead, till in some studies she was sufficiently advanced for a girl of fifteen. She needed more play and less Latin, and I told Miss Wendover so, very plainly.

For a wonder, Miss Wendover liked Arthur. She put both children in his care, and allowed him to use his judgment about their studies. He lightened Agnes' burdens at once, and she seemed much relieved. Agnes and Paul loved him at once, and they would meet him at the wharf every morning, and accompany him there every night. It was an excellent thing for Arthur, too, for the daily row to the Island was just the exercise he needed.

CHAPTER VII.

AGNES' STORY.

ALL familiar things he touched,
All common words he spake, became to me,
Like forms and sounds of a dinner world.

Shelley.

THE days flew so fast after Paul came, that winter was gone, and spring was with us before we realized it. Paul and I had so much to occupy our minds, that we hardly noted how time sped. We had our lessons, our play, our hours and hours of reading, to say nothing of the favorite amusement of all, castle-building.

Without being ill, Paul had been quite delicate all winter, and during the coldest weather, Aunt Wendover kept him indoors; for our climate was more severe than that he had been accustomed to. But despite all Aunt Wendover's precaution, he took a very heavy cold toward the last of April, and it was followed by congestion of the lungs. He was ill for a long time, and Dr. Barnham came twice every day. Indeed, when the disease was at its height, my aunt made him spend all his time there. I think she suffered terribly in those

days when Paul's life hung in the balance. I know I never saw her so moved.

I often heard the servants talking that it was likely that Paul would die, and then I would go to the dark stairway and think hopelessly what the future would be without him. "I can't bear it, I can't bear it!" I would keep saying, all the time shedding passionate tears. Dr. Barnham found me there one day when Paul was perhaps worse than usual. I heard him coming, but I supposed it was Hawkins, and I crouched close to the banister, trying to escape his notice. But Dr. Barnham's voice said, "What, Agnes? Here all alone, and crying, too, I'll be bound!" He lifted me on his knee, and talked to me so kindly that I cried the harder. I was unused to kindness from any one except Paul! Presently the doctor asked me if I had taken any breakfast, and when I confessed that I had not so much as thought of it, he led me to the dining-room, and ringing the bell, ordered a lunch. When it came, he sat down by me, and poured my milk and cut my meat, making me eat till I lost my faintness and felt stronger. When I insisted that I could not eat any more, he took me on his knee again, and without talking he held me there a long time, smoothing the hair that was tangled, for in my misery I had not thought of

making myself neat. I felt a blessed sense of comfort as I nestled close to him, and I lost the feeling of utter wretchedness that I had borne so long. At last I nerved myself to ask the question that trembled on my lips.

"Dr. Barnham, will Paul die?" I said, fighting back the tears.

"Poor little Agnes! Now listen to me. Paul has been very, very ill, and is so still. We cannot tell just how it will end, but I have strong hopes that he will get well."

I couldn't keep back the tears, for I felt that the doctor was keeping the worst from me.

"Would you like to see Paul?" he asked.

"Oh! can I see him?" I cried eagerly.

"I don't see why not if you will be very quiet. You must not talk at all, and Paul cannot speak to you. He wants to see you."

"How do you know?" I asked, happy in the thought that Paul wished for me even in his sickness.

"He has asked for you several times, and this morning I promised him that you should come. He is sleeping now, but when he wakes I will come for you. Go and tidy your hair and make yourself neat, so you will look nice. Be a little woman, Agnes, and don't let Paul see that you are worried over him."

When he left the room I fled up-stairs to

make myself ready. I brushed my hair till it shone, then I opened the wardrobe and took out the crimson dress that Paul liked. Then I sat down to await the doctor's summons. I thought he would never come, and the time lagged heavily. I could not interest myself in reading, so I watched the raindrops as they trickled down the window-pane. At last the doctor tapped at my door. "Come," he said, "Paul is awake now."

I grasped his hand. "Aunt Wendover won't let me come in the room," I said.

"Yes, she will. She won't contradict the doctor's orders. And I am sure that you are just the medicine that Paul needs. I am glad to say that he has had a refreshing sleep, and he seems brighter. So come on, my little woman, and make your first visit to a sick-room."

I kept behind him as he opened the door of Paul's room, for I was afraid of what Aunt Wendover might say. She sat at the foot of the bed watching Paul intently. As soon as she saw me she looked displeased.

"Now, doctor—" she began.

But Dr. Barnham shook his head. "She will be quiet. I'll risk Agnes," he said. "And it will do Paul good to have her here."

"I presume you know what you are about, so

let her stay," she said, quite meekly for Aunt Wendover.

Paul smiled when he saw me. I crept up to the little bed, and we clasped hands.

"Now, youngsters, no talking," said the doctor. "Agnes may stay here so long as you are quiet, but at the first attempt to talk, out she goes." He spoke in a gruff way, but he smiled, and I was not frightened in the least.

I stayed there all day, and no one molested me. Paul smiled when he looked at me, and we seemed to understand each other from the touch of our hands, so speech was unnecessary.

Paul grew better soon after, and in a few days I was allowed to read to him. It was a long time before he was around again, and after he was able to be dressed, he was still very weak. Dr. Barnham watched him closely, and I guessed that he was not satisfied with his progress.

One day I overheard the doctor and my aunt talking in the hall. I caught these words, "Better take both children to the sea-shore."

"I had thought of taking Paul. There is no need for Agnes to go. She shall stay at home and go on with her lessons."

I strained my ears to catch the doctor's answer, for I was sure that he would put in a plea for me.

"Do you think you could get Paul to go without Agnes?" he asked. "He wouldn't improve if he was alone. Follow my advice, Miss Wendover. Take both children and let them do just as they like all the time. Sea air will do you good, too; you are worn out with all your watching."

In a few days my aunt, Paul and I and Miller set out for the sea-shore. I did not like the sea at first, but Paul was nearly wild with delight, and before long I was as fond of it as he was. He improved rapidly after we got there. We dug in the sand, gathered shells, paddled in the water, or oftener still, lay on the beach and told stories as we did at home. Even my inexperienced eyes saw that Paul was gaining strength, and my cup of happiness was full.

One sunny morning as we sat on the beach, Paul remarked, "Don't you think the sea is very pretty this morning, Agnes? It makes me feel very happy, and I have had poetry running through my head all the morning."

"O Paul!" I cried. "Will you please make some poetry now? I have never heard any of your poetry, though I know you are clever enough to do anything."

"I often make it, but I can't write well, and I always forget it. I wish I could write as quickly and nicely as you can, Agnes."

"I'll write everything down for you, Paul," I said. "I have a pencil in my pocket, and I can tear a leaf out of 'Sandford and Merton.'" I did so, and sat with my pencil poised while I waited for him to begin.

"You must not hurry me, Agnes, for sometimes I can't find any words at all. I think they will come this morning, though, if I take time."

"Here are some," he said at length, when I had just put an extra fine point on my pencil. In my haste I broke it off, and then I had to sharpen it again.

"I am ready, Paul. Now *do* begin," I said.

"The sea is very sweet,
And its waves lap my feet.
The sky is very blue,
And the world is very new.

"That last line means that the world is pretty to-day. It is all washed clean after the shower, and it looks as if God had just made it all new," Paul explained.

"Go on, Paul! Make some more," I cried, in admiration. "That is lovely. That isn't all of it, is it?" I asked, for he lay quietly looking at a distant sail.

"I'll try, Agnes. I am thinking all the time. Sometimes it is very hard work to make poetry. I guess I have another verse now."

"My heart is very light,
And the world is very bright;
The pretty flowers smile
And blossom all the while."

"That is pretty," I said, making some extra flourishes to my capitals in honor of Paul's poetry. "Oh! how I wish I could be clever like you, Paul!"

"I am not very clever, Agnes; but some day I mean to be. I'll tell you what I mean to do when I am a man, Agnes." He lowered his voice almost to a whisper as he added, "I mean to make books."

"Why, Paul. Do people make books?" I asked.

"Of course," he answered, with superior wisdom. "How would we have any to read if somebody didn't make them?"

"I never thought about it before," I said. "I know you can write books if anybody can. Will you let me write them down for you like the poetry?"

"Of course, if you like. But I must learn to write better. I am getting to be a big boy, and I am mortified about my writing."

Paul brought out the long word in a way that I thought very grand. Then he added, "I've thought of another verse, Agnes.

"If I should die to-day,
And soar so far away,
Beyond the——"

"Now, Paul, don't talk about dying," I cried. "I shan't write any more," and I scratched out the last two lines.

"But, Agnes, we must die sometime. I was just thinking that I would like to die on a day like this, when the world is so pretty. I thought that I might die when I was so sick last spring."

"Were you afraid, Paul?" I asked in a whisper.

"No, Agnes, I don't think I was. You see, there is nothing to be afraid of. Jesus takes care of us when we are dying, and when we get to heaven we are always with him. Besides, my papa and mamma are there. So you see I had nothing to be afraid of."

"O Paul! I can't bear to hear you talk so. You are so good that I am afraid you *will* die. What should I do without you? If you weren't here nobody would make Aunt Wendover be good to me."

Paul patted my hand and said, "There, stop crying, Agnes, and we won't make any more poetry. I am getting better, for Dr. Barnham said so. Come, let's look for sea-urchins."

I dried my tears and followed him. He must

have meant to reassure me, for all the rest of the day he was in the wildest spirits. He never again referred to the poetry, but when I emptied my pockets that night I put the crumpled piece of paper among my treasures. I saw it not long ago. Years have passed since that morning, but I remember it as well as if it had been yesterday.

Aunt Wendover was almost kind, even to me. Dr. Barnham came and spent a week with us, bringing his wife with him. This was a pleasant surprise, and Mrs. Barnham was a delightful revelation. She was the first pretty woman I had ever seen. My aunt had once been handsome, and even then her features were fine, but I thought her positively ugly. All the servants at the Island were quite as bad, except Nurse Hillyer, who looked better to me. But Mrs. Barnham was very pretty, even in her manner. There was nothing frigid or over dignified about her, and one could not help loving her. She was plump and blue-eyed and brown-haired, and she was always busied with some wonderful fancy-work. I used to hang around her chair, and Paul was her devoted admirer. He picked up her pocket-handkerchief, held her worsted, and gathered flowers for her to wear.

Altogether she seemed to be just the woman for Dr. Barnham, and when she said that we

must come often to see her when she went home, I began to cherish a hope that Aunt Wendover would not refuse her consent if Paul wished to go. I think Mrs. Barnham tried very hard to be friendly with my aunt, but she made little progress. My aunt was merely polite, and Miller looked askance at the pretty little woman.

After the week ended, Dr. Barnham returned home, but Mrs. Barnham remained, and in a few days Mr. Grey came. The sea air did wonders for him, as well as for Paul, and we enjoyed his company very much. We were together all the time, that is, Mrs. Barnham, Mr. Grey, Paul and I; for Aunt Wendover stayed quietly in the hotel nearly all the time.

The summer passed too quickly, and we began to make ready to return home. Paul's cheeks were rosy, and his fair complexion was burned by the sun and wind; altogether he looked very unlike the boy that had come to the sea-shore three months before. Mr. Grey, too, seemed better, so much so that he began to talk of resuming his studies. But the doctor would not hear of such a thing; so we did not lose our teacher just then.

One day early in September, we stepped upon the wharf at Wendover Island. I felt a sudden sinking of heart at the sight of the house, and I sighed as I thought of the pleasant days that

were behind me. But Paul was there, dancing around as if pleased with everything, and I could not long be sorry.

"Come, Agnes," he said, "let's go and see the calf and the chickens. Oh, there's Bruno!" And he stooped to pat the head of the great hound who ran to meet him. The creature stood in front of me wagging his tail, and regarding me mildly, and Paul said, "Pat him, Agnes, you needn't be afraid of him. He is glad to see us."

So for the first time in my life I patted the dog's head, and allowed him to lick my hands. I had always been mortally afraid of him, but now I think he understood that we were friends.

We roamed all over the Island till the dinner-bell rang. Aunt Wendover stood in the dining-room window. She had changed her traveling dress for the usual house dress of black silk, and I thought that her face, too, had changed, that it wore its old set look.

But it lighted up as Paul came in all rosy from his exercise. We had not changed our clothes, but no accident had happened to him, while I had been so unfortunate as to tear a great rent in my frock. I knew that I deserved a rebuke, but Paul averted the blow.

"Oh dear, Aunt Wendover, I 'spose Agnes and I look dreadful; but can't we please eat just

as we are this once; for we are so tired and hungry! Seems to me I could eat the dishes up."

Aunt Wendover smiled. "Well, sit down as you are, since you are so hungry. I want you to be hungry, then you will grow to be a stout man."

"I mean to be," said Paul, as he dispatched his soup, I mean to be fat when I grow up, fatter than Dr. Barnham.

"Say, Auntie Wendover, Agnes and I have been all over the Island, and I am glad to get home again. I like home better yet than the sea-shore."

I think it pleased my aunt that he loved the Island; for she loved every stick and stone on it. But she made no reply, she merely sent Hawkins to bring a jar of currant jelly, which was an especial favorite of Paul's.

After supper Paul and I made the tour of the house, then he played for me for a long time. I was sure that Aunt Wendover was in the next room listening. If she was, she must have become reconciled to the sound of the piano. After that we went to the library, and sitting by the open window, we lived over the summer, and made plans for the pleasant autumn days.

When the clock struck eight I found myself

in my own little room, and after I was in bed I began to feel more at home, for the white curtained windows looked out upon the water, and I could hear the ripple washing against the shore. And so ended my first visit to the outside world. I fell asleep wondering when I should have another.

CHAPTER VIII.

AGNES' STORY.

We speak of educating our children. Do we know that our children also educate us?—*Mrs. Sigourney.*

ONE Sunday a returned missionary occupied our pulpit, and instead of the regular sermon by the good pastor, we listened to a spirited address from the stranger. Paul and I heard much that was new to us, and we went home full of excitement.

On our way out we stopped to speak to Dr. Barnham, and the pastor came up to shake hands with us, and inquired our names. Paul spoke his plainly enough, but I don't think he heard mine.

"Will you stay to Sunday-school?" the minister asked. "We have it directly."

"Thank you," said Paul. "We would like to stay, but John is waiting with the boat."

"Where do you live, that you go home in a boat?"

"On Wendover Island. Miss Wendover is our aunt," said Paul.

The minister managed to cover his surprise,

then he turned to speak a few words to Dr. Barnham.

At dinner that day Paul said, "Aunt Wendover, the minister shook hands with us this morning, and I asked him to come and see us. Do you know him, Aunt Wendover?"

"Not very well. So you asked him to call, did you?"

"Yes, I did. Was that polite? I thought it was."

"Very polite. You are quite a Chesterfield, Paul."

"Who is he?" Paul inquired.

"He was famous for his manners. You can read about him and save me the trouble of telling you."

"Papa was very polite, and people liked him. I mean to be just like papa when I am a man. Do you think I look like him, Aunt Wendover?"

"I dare say you will."

"You knew papa, Aunt Wendover, didn't you?"

"Yes, very well; but don't ask any questions," replied my aunt; and I noticed that she stooped to pick up her napkin instead of telling Hawkins to do it.

"Aunt Wendover, why do people never come here?" Paul asked, as if a new idea had struck

him. "I have been here a long time, and I haven't seen anybody but Dr. Barnham and the grocer-man and the butcher-man. Why don't we have company as papa and mamma did?"

"Did you have much company?" my aunt asked, evading his question.

"Oh, a lot of people used to come in the evening. Papa would play and mamma would sing, and everybody had a good time. Mamma used to look so pretty then; she used to wear a white dress and put flowers in her hair. Would it make your head ache to have company?"

"I think it would, Paul. I am an old woman, and I can't learn new ways."

"Why, Aunt Wendover, you are not so very old. Your hair is almost black, and my papa's was gray when God took him away. Aunt Wendover, I wish Agnes and I could stay to Sunday-school. They have such a pretty chapel, and I am sure it must be very nice to have Sunday-school in there. I used to go to Sunday-school with mamma, and I liked it so much. You know you learn all about Jesus there, and you sing hymns and put money in the basket to send Bibles to poor children. Isn't it a dreadful thing, Aunt Wendover, that there are so many children and grown-up peo-

ple in the world who know nothing about God?"

Paul slipped from his chair and went over to Aunt Wendover. He was perfectly unconscious, his eyes were larger even than usual, and they shone with the message he had to deliver. "Why, Aunt Wendover," he went on, "the missionary man told us that way off in India, people put their little children in the river and let the crocodiles eat them, because they think their make-believe gods will be pleased. And they say their prayers to such awful wooden and stone things they call gods. Just as if such a god could take care of them! Of course these people can't be blamed if they don't know about our God. And the man said that we should be thankful that we lived in such a 'lightened country. He said a great deal more that I wanted to tell you, but I can't 'member it all. Isn't it dreadful that people don't know about our God, Aunt Wendover?"

He looked up in her face, and she was forced to nod her assent.

"It makes me feel badly when I think about it, and I think that when I am a man I shall study their language and go to one of those dreadful places and teach them about the Bible. But it will be a long time before I can go," he sighed, "and there don't seem to be much for

children to do, 'cept to give money, and I haven't any. And how are the heathen to get to heaven if they don't know about God?"

"If you want to give money I will give you some," said my aunt.

"Thank you, Aunt Wendover, but it wouldn't be my money. If you will give me some I'll give it to the minister and tell him that you sent it."

"No, you must not do that. If I give you money it is just as much yours as if you earned it." As she spoke she took a shining gold piece from her purse and gave it to him.

He took it reluctantly, saying, "The missionary man said we should give till we felt it, and I am sure that I shall not feel this at all. I feel as if I ought to tell the minister that this is yours."

Aunt Wendover shook her head. "But it is not mine. I gave it to you; you may spend it for candy or give it to the heathen, just as you please."

"Thank you very much, Aunt Wendover, but——"

"Well, what else? Isn't it enough?"

"I didn't mean that. I think Agnes would like to send some money to the heathen, too. She feels so sorry for them."

"Oh, you want Agnes to have some money,"

and Aunt Wendover took out another gold piece and gave it to Paul, who tossed it into my lap.

"Now I presume all the heathen will have Bibles and hymn-books," said my aunt.

"O Aunt Wendover! there are so many, you can't think. And it costs a great deal to send missionaries to them."

Next day Paul renewed the subject, saying, "Aunt Wendover, I want to earn some money. I am quite strong, and I can do a good many things. If you are willing, I think I can do John's work, and I won't charge very much. I want to make some money to give away."

"Perhaps I can give you more money, but I hardly think you could fill John's place."

"It is very nice of you to give me money; but won't you please let me earn some?"

I suppose she could not withstand the pleading face, and she said, "I want some one to read the papers to me, for my eyes are getting poor. I will pay you ten cents an hour if you like."

"I am afraid that is too much, for I can't pronounce the hard words."

"Never mind, if I choose to pay it."

"And what can Agnes do, Aunt Wendover?"

"Agnes? Does she want to earn money

too? She may ask Nurse Hillyer for some towels to hem, and if she does them neatly, nurse may pay her what her work is worth."

"Isn't Aunt Wendover getting good?" I said, as Paul and I turned toward the school-room.

"Yes, isn't it lovely that we can earn money?" he answered. "We can earn ever so many Bibles. See, there is Mr. Grey coming up the walk. Let's run and meet him."

We had grown very fond of Mr. Grey, and the lesson hours were pleasant ones. He had a way of making us see the bright side of the dullest studies. On pleasant days we used to leave the school-room and take our books down under the trees by the shore. Then, when our lessons were done, we used to have the most delightful talks. We told him all our troubles, and he gave us wise counsel. This morning Paul imparted our plans about earning missionary money. Mr. Grey had heard the sermon that had so aroused us, and he was in sympathy with us. Paul also told him his plan for going out to save the heathen.

"You see, Mr. Grey," he explained, "I am going to grow very wise, as wise as you are, and then I am going to some of those far-off places and tell the people how good God is, and how foolish it is to worship idols. That

must be what the Bible means where it says 'eyes have they but they see not, ears have they but they hear not.' Now the real God hears us and sees us all the time. I should think everybody would want to go and teach the heathen."

Mr. Grey laid his hand on Paul's. "My dear child," he said, "people are very human, and these countries lay a long way off, and there are great dangers to be gone through. Besides, some of us have duties nearer home, and some"—he spoke sadly—"have not sufficient strength."

"I know it is a long way to China, for it is right underneath us, and I should have to sail half way around the earth." And Paul opened his geography and began tracing his route with his index finger. I began to feel very lonely at the prospect of Paul's leaving me, but I consoled myself with the thought that he could not go for a great many years. Besides, I had reason to think that Aunt Wendover would veto any such plan.

For a long time Paul's mind ran on his missionary money. He read the papers to Aunt Wendover, running to search the dictionary for the meaning of every new word, and discussing the news with the air of a politician. I think his opinions of the Irish question, and

his criticisms of Bismarck's policy must have amused my aunt, for she smiled now and then. She very often complained of her eyes, and it was a very common thing for her to call Paul to read to her. He kept an account of the time he spent reading, and every Saturday Aunt Wendover settled with him. She wished him to acquire business habits, and she taught him to make out his bills, and then he carefully receipted them. I tried to earn my mite, too, but I disliked sewing, and therefore I was awkward at it. It took quite a while for me to hem a towel to suit Nurse Hillyer, and many were the stitches that I had to pick out. So my contributions to the missionary box were small and infrequent. I was more deft at housework, so I sometimes helped Nurse Hillyer dust the furniture. But I was happiest when she allowed me to help her in the storeroom, and I enjoyed pasting labels on her jars of preserves and pickles.

An incident happened about this time that will serve to show the trend of Paul's mind. We had been over to the city with nurse, to buy some clothing. It was a keen, frosty day, and our warm wraps were very comfortable, as we breasted the wind. We made our purchases, Paul buying a new overcoat that Aunt Wendover fancied he needed, and we were on

our way home when on the corner of a street we met the most forlorn object I had ever seen. It was a lad of Paul's age; he was very scantily clothed, and his face was pinched with hunger. It was the first time that Paul realized that there was such destitution in the world, and he seemed greatly shocked.

He stopped before the boy and asked, "Is that all the clothes you have?"

The boy nodded, and drew his ragged coat around him.

"Have you no overcoat?" was Paul's next question.

"No, I never had one, nor I never expect to have one."

Quick as a flash Paul stripped the new overcoat from his shoulders, and held it out to the boy, who hardly comprehended his action. "Take it, I don't need it. I have another one," said Paul, and he took the old overcoat from the package and put it on.

"My eye! But it's a nice one," said the strange boy as he buttoned Paul's new coat around him. "Won't your marm scold you for giving this away?"

"I have no mamma, but I have an aunt who takes care of me. She is very good, and she gives me money to send to the heathen."

All this time Nurse Hillyer had stood as if

rooted to the spot, but now she found her voice. "Master Paul, master Paul, come on, before you get into any more mischief."

But Paul did not heed her, he was too intent watching the strange lad.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, "you look as if you might be."

"I'm always hungry," the boy answered, winking hard to keep back a suspicious mist that Paul's kind words had brought to his eyes.

Paul pulled at nurse's dress. "Nurse Hillyer, let me have some money to buy this boy some supper. I'll pay you when we get home." He took the money and thrust it into the other boy's hand, saying, "Get something nice and hot, roast beef and pudding and coffee and——"

But Nurse Hillyer hurried Paul away in spite of his protestations that he must find out the boy's name.

"What your aunt will say to your giving away that coat, I'm sure I don't know," she said.

"Aunt Wendover and I understand each other," said Paul quietly. For my part, I was quite indignant at what I considered her interference.

I suppose she told her mistress, for when Paul and I saw Aunt Wendover next, she inquired, "Well, Paul, where is your new coat?"

His face flushed a deep red, and he went and stood by her chair. "Aunt Wendover, I gave it to a poor boy. He had none, and I had two; I couldn't keep both! Besides, Christ says that he that hath two coats should give to him that hath none."

"But why didn't you give the old coat to the beggar? It surely was good enough for him."

"Christ says, 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.' And if Christ were here, I wouldn't give him my oldest overcoat."

Aunt Wendover seemed to have no answer to make. At last she asked, "Do you expect to wear your old coat this winter?"

"Of course I do, I am willing to do it."

That night Paul lay on his little bed moaning as if in pain, and my aunt went to him, asking him if he felt ill.

"No, I am not ill."

"Then you must have been dreaming," she said, "for you moaned."

"I can't sleep for thinking of the pain of the world. O, Aunt Wendover, there are so many cold and hungry people, and we have so much more than we need! I can't forget how others suffer! It seems wrong to lie here safe and warm, when many other children quite as good as I have no beds and no homes!"

"Paul, you must not be so silly," said my aunt. "You can't help it, can you?"

"I might help a little now; but I mean to do a great deal when I am a man."

"Then wait till you are a man. Go to sleep now, like a sensible boy."

"This is a pretty state of things!" I heard her say, as she passed my door. "The child will go mad if I don't do something. I must send for Dr. Barnham."

Next day the doctor came. I was in the adjoining room, and I caught some of the conversation between him and my aunt.

"I don't like it," I heard her say. "He is constantly brooding over other people's troubles. He cries in his sleep, and talks about relieving the world's misery. I feel as if I have a new Buddah on my hands. I wish I had kept him closely on the Island! He sees too much when he leaves it."

"He will have to know all this sooner or later, Alicia. I didn't mean to say that. Excuse me."

"I don't mind. Go on with what you were saying. I want to know just what you think of Paul. Is his brain in a healthy state?"

"His brain is all right, but he has more heart than most people have. That is no harm, though."

"I am not so sure that it is no harm. I don't want him to go mooning around the world in the way he has begun. Besides, I am afraid he will die young, he is so good."

"Nonsense!" said the doctor stoutly. "It is only in story books that the good children die. More likely that Paul will live and develop into a philanthropist. How would you like that?"

"He may be what he likes if he will grow up strong and well. I'll tell you the truth, I wouldn't lose him for all the Wendover money ten times over!"

"He is a fine child, and he will be a credit to you yet. Arthur says that he has an excellent mind, and Agnes, too, he calls her a very bright girl."

"Agnes? I never thought her very brilliant. She isn't much like the Wendovers, except in looks. I wish Robert had married more sensibly."

"His wife was a good woman, I guess?"

"Humph! She was a Roman Catholic."

"What difference, when you deny all creeds?" asked the doctor.

I imagined that Aunt Wendover was embarrassed, for she was silent a while. When she did speak, it was to say, "I am afraid to let Paul have his way. He does the most Quix-

otic things!" And then she told about his overcoat.

Dr. Barnham laughed heartily. "Good," he said. "Let him go. You have money enough; there is no fear that he will make you bankrupt. If I were you, I would let him wear his old coat all winter. Don't spoil his happiness by giving him a new one. If it is some self-denial, all the better. He has a warm heart."

"Yes, I know, but I wish he was more practical. Now Agnes would not have done anything like that."

"Agnes might have wished to do it, but she would never have dared. She has too much fear of you."

"I am not harsh to the child, doctor. At least, I don't mean to be. But what course would you advise me to follow with Paul? I sometimes wish that he was a coarse, healthy child, and less of a girl. He is too delicate."

"He will come out all right, Miss Wendover. His father would never have died of consumption if he had not been worked and worried into it. Excuse me, Alicia! I don't mean to be offensive, but I want to prove to you that Paul has a good chance for a long life. Make him read less and take more exercise. Send him out to shovel snow till he is tired. As soon as spring comes, set him to work in the

garden. Both children have their heads too full of books. I am going to send Arthur over with a lot of dumb bells and Indian clubs, and I shall tell him to turn the school-room into a gymnasium. You needn't be shocked if they make a racket."

"I shall mind nothing, if Paul gets to be like other children. I hope I can get this nonsense out of his head and make a good animal out of him."

"Send him over to my house often, and Agnes too. It will do them good, and it will do us good. There are no children at our house, and my wife finds it dull when I am in the office. I will tell Arthur what you wish, and we will try to make Paul think less. But you may be prepared for anything, for that child is something more than ordinary. He is odd enough to be a genius, and if he don't play the piano like a genius, then my ears deceive me."

And then the doctor put on his great coat and hurried through the hall. I made sure that my aunt was not in sight, then I ran after him. He turned and smiled when he saw me coming.

"Going to see me down to the wharf, Agnes? Get a shawl then, for Jack Frost is abroad."

I seized a shawl, and slipping my hand in his, walked along with him. All the while my aunt and he were talking, it had not occurred to me that I was doing wrong to listen; but now I thought that it was not exactly the right thing to do. So I said, "Dr. Barnham, I was sewing in the back parlor, and I heard all that you and Aunt Wendover said. I am sorry. I suppose I ought to have gone away."

"No harm done, I guess," said the doctor, kindly.

"Dr. Barnham, you truly don't think that Paul will die because he is so good, do you?"

"Not a bit of it! The Lord has need of him, no doubt. But he is too quiet, and he thinks too much. I want you to make him play a great deal. If he thinks you wish it he will do it to please you. Don't let him know your reason. That would spoil everything."

"I won't," I said, feeling very important. Then the doctor shook hands with me, and stepped into his boat.

I think Paul was surprised at my sudden fondness for sports. When it was too cold to take exercise out of doors, I used to coax him to play battle-door and shuttle-cock in the corridor. And on fine days we played in the snow, making wonderful snow men, or coasting down the only elevation the Island boasted.

Mr. Grey shortened our lessons, and we had a great deal of gymnastic exercise. I think the doctor saw that all this was as good for Mr. Grey as for Paul. I think we all enjoyed the change. I know that I did.

CHAPTER IX.

AGNES' STORY.

IT is faith in something and enthusiasm for something that makes a life worth looking at.—*Holmes.*

AFTER a while Mr. Grey went back to college, and then to a theological seminary. After him, Paul and I had a number of teachers, some of whom we liked, and some we disliked, but no one ever took Mr. Grey's place in our hearts. Certain it was, that no one suited Aunt Wendover as Mr. Grey had done.

Paul began to do very nicely with his studies, and what pleased Aunt Wendover still more, he took some interest in sports and plays, though he did not forget that there were graver things in the world. She allowed us to spend every Saturday with the Barnhams. The wonders we saw, and the fun we had, sufficed us to talk about till Saturday came around again. Besides this, we went to Sunday-school as well as to church every Sunday, and this was a great pleasure to us. My aunt never went to church, and this was a cause of great anxiety to Paul, who was a religious child. Even I

worried over it a little, and wished that she would go.

About this time she bought a new piano for Paul's use, and employed a music teacher for him from the city. Herr Keller was a German, and he was perfectly delighted with his music-loving pupil. He was determined to lay a thorough foundation, and he put the little hand and head through a wearisome course of study. From the time Herr Keller came, Paul seemed to be perfectly absorbed in his music. He would desert his play and leave his meals untasted, until Aunt Wendover came to the rescue, and forbade him to practice more than three hours any day.

The best of Paul's playing was that he never seemed to think that there was anything extraordinary in what he did. When we were at the Barnhams', and Mrs. Barnham or the doctor would ask him to play, he would slip on the piano stool and play before a whole roomful, not seeming in the least elated by their applause. Nothing outside of the thing he was playing seemed to affect him, though when he was a mere child I have seen him lay his head upon the keyboard and cry over the heart-break in the music. Aunt Wendover always frowned on such a display of feeling, and her

quick "Nonsense, Paul!" would serve to dry his tears and bring him back to himself.

For fiction Paul cared but little, except for Scott's novels, and these he read aloud to Aunt Wendover. Her sight was failing her, and I think she loved to hear Paul's pleasant voice. So evening after evening we listened to him as he read from *Old Mortality*, *Ivanhoe*, or some other volume that held us spell-bound. There were many books that Paul read simply to please Aunt Wendover, vigorous stories of boy life at school or at sea. He confided to me that he did not like Tom Brown, and he would not read Cooper's novels if he thought Aunt Wendover would not mind.

He had often asked her for a violin. I imagine she thought that one instrument was enough for him to use to give expression to his feelings, so she always put him off, telling him to wait till he was older. But he confided his wish to Herr Keller, who responded with a "*Ja wohl!*" and a queer little nod. The next time he came to the Island he had a queer looking package under his arm. I listened at the door of the parlor, and as I heard a new sound, I guessed that the longed-for violin had come. I said nothing, for I feared that Aunt Wendover would confiscate it. Week after week I listened, proud of Paul's evident progress.

One day Aunt Wendover passed through the hall at lesson time. "Who is that playing the violin?" she asked sharply.

"Paul, I think," I answered in a frightened way.

She threw the door open, and there stood Paul, his beloved violin under his dimpled chin. He smiled when he saw her, and he played a simple little air very accurately.

"*Ach!*" said Herr Keller, rubbing his hands together, "*Ach!* but he will make ze gute violinist! He goes besser on it than on the piano. One instrument is not enough for him. He need more yet. The organ suit him by-and-by."

Paul stood still in the center of the room, grasping his bow. His face was flushed with surprise and pleasure, and yet he was fearful that Aunt Wendover was displeased.

"You don't mind, Aunt Wendover, do you?" he asked timidly.

"No, if you don't study yourself to death. You will be obliged to give less time to your piano now, for mind, you cannot spend more than three hours a day on your music."

After that the piano practice was neglected for the violin. The little arms must have ached often, but Paul faithfully persevered till it was a pleasure to listen to his playing. Then, when

he became quite proficient, he insisted that I must accompany him on the piano. I seldom played unless it was to lay some ghost or give expression to some mood, and I never enjoyed any instrument but the old organ. I had no gift for music. But for a couple of years Paul had insisted upon giving me an occasional lesson on the piano, and I had made some progress. I used to try the selections he made for me, but my awkward attempts must have sorely tried his music-loving soul. He never scolded, no matter how much I bungled. He would point out my mistake, and wait with the utmost patience, while I played the passage over and over, and he would praise me when I went through it with a blunder or two less.

And so with our music, our books, and our studies, the time passed quickly till Paul was nearly thirteen, and I fourteen years old.

Not long after he passed his thirteenth birthday he began to talk of going to school. At first, Aunt Wendover would not hear of this, but Dr. Barnham advised her to let Paul have his way, for he thought the companionship of boys of his own age might be the best thing for him.

"Let him mix with other lads," said the doctor. "Let him get his head full of foot-ball and cricket. He needs more chest, he has too

much brain for his brawn. I would have advised you to send him away to a boys' school, but I feared that Agnes would break her heart."

"Well," sighed my aunt, "do as you see fit."

So to school Paul went. Every morning I went down to the wharf and watched his little boat glide over the water. Then I turned back to my school-room and to the studies that seemed duller than ever, now that Paul was not there to share them with me. His studies and mine began to differ.

My condition grew better each year. My aunt noticed me more, and now and then she seemed to take some interest in me. To Paul, however, she was an entirely different person; she idolized him. Indeed, I think it was for his sake that she treated me with more consideration, for no one could slight me and fail to wound my loyal little champion. His slightest wish was law in the house, although I must say he was never selfish or exacting.

After awhile a very pleasant thing happened. Mr. Grey came back to live among us, or at least, he came to the city, and it seemed good to have him so near us. The old pastor's health was failing, and as Arthur Grey had finished his theological course, he came to be Dr. Murray's assistant. I had never heard anything

that affected me as Mr. Grey's preaching did; it seemed to go straight to my heart. Thoughts that had never before troubled me, ran through my mind. I felt a new sense of sin, and often this question rang in my ears: "What would become of you if you should die?"

I did not know that the same thoughts were troubling Paul, and I should not have known, if he had not told me.

"Agnes," he said one day, "wouldn't you like to join the church?"

"Why, Paul!" I exclaimed, startled by the question; for the idea was a new one.

"I would like to, I want to," he said.

He was lying on the grass, watching the clouds, for we were in our favorite haunt down by the shore.

"Ever since Mr. Grey began to preach for us, I have wished to be better."

"You are good enough, Paul; but I can never be," I said sadly.

"None of us can be good enough, Agnes, that is, of ourselves. It is faith in Christ that makes anyone fit. Don't you remember, Mr. Grey explained it last communion Sunday?"

I did not answer. I was thinking of that Sabbath, when, for the first time, I had seen the Lord's Supper commemorated. The wonder, the mystery of it, had awed me.

Before that day Nurse Hillyer had always risen and gone out with us before the sacrament was administered. But that time Paul and I were alone, and we remained through the service.

"And should you eat the communion, Paul?" I asked, almost in a whisper.

"Of course I shall if I join the church!"

"I should not dare, Paul. I know I never can be fit."

"Agnes, I think we had better talk to Mr. Grey. He knows so much more than we do, that he can tell us what to do. Shall we row over now? The air is getting cooler, and we have time to get back before dinner."

I was willing, and we pushed out from the shore, each taking an oar, for I had overcome my dislike of the water.

We found Mr. Grey in his study busied with a microscope and some insects.

"I am glad you are here," he said, "I was just wishing for you. Come and see what curious beetles I have here. They came from South America."

But Paul plunged right into the subject uppermost in his mind. "Mr. Grey, Agnes and I are thinking about joining the church. Do you think we might? Or are we too young?"

Mr. Grey was all attention at once. He

hastily put the beetles away, and drew his chair up between us. "No, you are not too young," he said. "The sooner you begin, the easier it will be for you. Now tell me all about your feelings."

Paul talked easily enough, and I was surprised to find that all was so clear before him. How I wished for a like faith, for I felt that I was of all people the least worthy.

"It is the simplest thing in the world, Agnes," said Mr. Grey, turning to me. "If you are sure that you love our Lord and that you wish to make his service your highest desire, then you ought to join yourself with his professed followers. Do you feel all this, my child?"

My only answer was a sudden burst of tears. Mr. Grey said no more to me, but he and Paul talked together till I grew calmer, then Paul rose to go home. We walked hand in hand through the streets, and when we reached our boat, we rowed home in silence. Nor did we speak again on that subject during the evening.

But that night as I lay tossing on my bed, I grew more peaceful, and before I fell asleep I felt that it was settled. I would enlist under Christ's banner, and serve him faithfully all my life.

CHAPTER X.

DR. BARNHAM'S STORY.

"ARE ye ready, ye children, to eat of the bread of
Atonement?"
Thus, with emotion, he asked, and together answered
the children,
"Yes!" with deep sobs interrupted.
Children of the Lord's Supper.

ARTHUR told me of the children's visit, so I was not surprised when Miss Wendover sent for me to come to the Island. On my way there, I met Agnes and Paul rowing themselves to the city on some errand for their aunt, and I guessed that she had sent them out of the way purposely.

"What do you think those children have taken into their heads now?" was Miss Wendover's salutation.

She had walked down to the shore to meet me, and it seemed to me that her tall, slender figure looked unusually straight, and that her face wore a more set expression even than usual.

"Well, what is your news?" I inquired.

"It is this. They want to join the church! Did you ever hear of such a ridiculous thing?"

"I do not see anything ridiculous in it," I said.

"Of course it is Paul's idea, for Agnes never originates anything. I was perfectly speechless this morning when Paul announced that he wanted to join the church, and that they had been to talk to Mr. Grey. I must put a stop to it, but I hardly know how to do it. So I sent for you."

"Why should you wish to stop it? I cannot see how you dare attempt such a thing. If God has called those children, what right have you to interfere?"

"Oh, it is all nonsense! I wish I had kept Paul at home. This comes of his going to church. I wouldn't mind Agnes so much, for it don't hurt a woman to be religious, and Agnes is bound to be one of the yea-nay sort. But I am ambitious for Paul, and I will not see him spoil his life before he knows what he wants. I have let him do as he pleased, I have given money to beggars, and sent victuals and medicine to sick people, and made myself ridiculous to please him. But I cannot let him have his way in this. He will get his head full of religion, then he will want to be a minister, or worse yet, a missionary."

"What right have you to say that he shall do neither? Take care what you do. You

may turn Paul away from the right now, and he may never get back. You are daring more than I should dare."

"I tell you I do think of the child, and all I do is for his good. I want him to make up for the miserable failures of the Wendovers'. He shall have all the Wendover money to do it with. I have some family pride yet, and I want Paul to take my name and distinguish it. The child has genius. Herr Keller says his playing is wonderful."

"My dear Miss Wendover," I said, "what has all this to do with his becoming a Christian? If his talent is consecrated talent, so much the better. I should think that you, who have seen the evils of disbelief, would be glad that the future master of this house will be different from his predecessors. I use the privilege of an old friend, and speak plainly."

"I see you do," she said, with some bitterness, "but you cannot convince me. I mean to give Paul the best education that can be had, then I want him to travel and see the world. When he is tired of that he shall come home and enjoy all there is for him. I am glad that I have saved money all these years. Paul shall have it all, and he shall enjoy life."

I looked at her, and I wondered what happi-

ness her money had brought to her, and before I could stop it, the question asked itself.

She turned a shade paler, and answered, "I had not an even chance. You know the story of my life. Don't dig up the buried past."

"I must, when nothing but the past will move you. Alicia, how will you meet Paul Raymond? How can you account to him for the precious soul of the child he left in your keeping?"

"I knew I had struck home, for her face quivered, and her hands worked nervously. I knew that I was wounding her cruelly, but I kept on.

"Let the boy live in the faith of his father. It kept Paul through adversity and illness, and it made his bed easy when he lay dying in an almshouse among strangers. What can you give his child that will afford him the same consolation?"

She raised her hands as if to ward off a blow. "I submit!" she said. "Let Paul do as he will, for his father's sake."

It was strange that when nothing else could move her, the name of the dead could break her stubborn will.

So she gave her consent to the children's request, and they never knew how nearly it had been withheld. I don't think she bore me any

ill-will for my plain speaking. I was sorry to hurt her so, but I had to do it. I had seen enough of the Wendover will, and I think she had, for it had blighted her life.

On the Sabbath when Paul and Agnes stood before the congregation, many of the people said, Amen. The tears filled my eyes as I looked at them and wondered if the time would ever come when that proud, hard woman would humble herself to bow at God's altar. I wished she could have seen the children that morning. Agnes, in her simple white dress, with a bunch of flowers in her bosom, made a sweet picture of girlish piety. And Paul looked like some youthful saint, his face wore such a rapt expression. It was a lovely face that he had, and it was the mirror of a lovely soul within.

I watched the children all through the solemn service that followed, and I wondered what life would bring to each. "Agnes is all woman," I thought, "and she will help make some home bright. It will be the first home she has known, for in that great house is no corner that is home-like. Everything there is elegant and costly, yet I am always glad to get back to my own home. There is not a rich thing there, but there is comfort, and somehow, it is home. It makes all the difference in the world whether the presiding genius of the house

is Alicia Wendover or Nellie Barnham. God bless the little woman! Without her help, Agnes would not be growing up into such a lovable girl. I hope she will make a woman just like Nellie, and I wish that aunt of hers could appreciate her. But she never will, unless something changes her wonderfully. That afternoon I thought of them again; and my wife and I spoke of them.

"Didn't Paul and Agnes look lovely this morning?" Nellie asked.

"Yes," I said, "I was just thinking of them. I wonder what Paul will make of himself."

"I think more of Agnes' future. Paul can be anything he likes, but I don't see any outlook for Agnes," said Nellie, thoughtfully.

"I hardly expect any career for Agnes, I don't think she would want it. She will probably do like a certain good woman I know, make a charming home for somebody. But Paul, I think that with all his gifts he is bound to make his mark in the world. And I am sure that Miss Wendover expects great things of him."

"Don't mention Miss Wendover, Jack, if you please. I was thinking this morning how I pitied Agnes because she can't get away from her. By the way, Agnes looks like her, but there the resemblance ceases. Agnes is a very sweet girl, and she is very affectionate, too."

"I think she must take her sweetness from her Italian mother. I suppose the Wendovers felt affection for one another, in fact, I know they did, but they took care never to show it. We should not be too hard on Miss Wendover; God maketh us to differ. She is a better woman than she was seven years ago, and we must not look for a miracle."

"Nobody but Paul has any influence with her," said my wife.

"I know it. He can do a great deal with her, and she will have to put up with a good many innovations. He delights in giving, and he makes deep inroads on Miss Wendover's purse. If he is once master of Wendover House he will be likely to turn it into a hospital. If he was just like other boys, we would not care so much for him. They are queer children, both Agnes and Paul."

"Yes, they are," said Nellie, "they are like no one else."

After Paul went to school in the city, he began to change in some respects, and he showed more interest in manly sports. Of course this pleased Miss Wendover. I knew the change was an excellent thing for him, though I could not help pitying Agnes. Well, there always was money enough at Wendover House, whatever else was lacking. There was everything

but love, as I used to tell my wife before the children went there. Then there was plenty of affection between Paul and Agnes, and the place seemed a little more like home.

CHAPTER XI.

AGNES' STORY.

WHAT a thing friendship is, world without end.
Browning.

PAUL grew more fond of music each year, and his playing was considered quite wonderful.

One day when he was in his fifteenth year, he rushed into the school-room where I sat putting the finishing touches to a monstrosity supposed to be a picture. His face was all aglow with excitement, and he was out of breath.

"Why, Paul! What has happened?" I inquired.

"The organ! I have played it! O Agnes, you can't think what fun it is," he cried. "I have longed to touch it, but I did not dare. To-day Mr. Grey introduced me to the organist, and told him how music crazy I am, and the organist was real nice and jolly. He said he was going to the church to practice, and he asked me to go with him. He let me try the organ, and he said I did splendidly. I am going again; he said I must."

I smiled, as pleased as he was, for I was very proud of Paul's music. I made him sit down and go through the whole story again.

After that he often went to the church to practice, and for a while he thought and talked of nothing but the organ.

A couple of months later, Paul announced that Mr. Eliot was going to take a vacation, and that he, Paul, was going to play the organ in his absence. He told the news at the dinner-table, and Aunt Wendover showed considerable interest.

"Do you understand it well enough to play in public?" she asked. "I wouldn't have you fail for anything."

"I shall not do you any discredit, Auntie Wendover. I understand the organ, and it understands me. I feel perfectly happy when I get my fingers on the keys. I am so sorry that you won't hear me play. Won't you come? I am going to play such a pretty voluntary."

"You can play it for me at home."

"Yes, but it will not sound so well." Aunt Wendover, when will you go to church?"

She merely shook her head in reply, and Paul looked disappointed.

"Aunt Wendover," he said, later in the

evening, "whose music is that in the closet of the red room? I found great piles of it there."

"Some of it is mine, I suppose."

"Did you ever play?" Paul asked, in surprise.

"Yes, I used to play."

I was as surprised as Paul, for I never imagined Aunt Wendover doing anything of the kind.

"I suppose I may use the music?" Paul asked. "I didn't think to ask you before."

"I don't care who uses it. I am not likely to want it now."

A few days later Paul and I were rummaging over the music in the closet, when I found an exercise book with "Paul Raymond" written on the fly-leaf.

"Here is one of your old harmony books," I said, tossing it to Paul.

"I never had a book with such a cover," said Paul. "It must be Aunt Wendover's."

He opened it carelessly, but when he saw the name, he showed a good deal of excitement. "It must have been my father's," he said softly. "It is not mine, and it is my father's name. I wonder how his book came to be here! I shall ask Aunt Wendover about it."

He put the music back in the closet, and then he sat looking at the exercise book which

he still held in his hand. When, at last, the dinner-bell rang, he took the book down with him. I noticed that he was very quiet all through dinner, and I guessed that he was thinking of his father.

When dinner was over, he carried the book to Aunt Wendover, and asked, "Whose book is this? I found it in the red room."

Aunt Wendover made a feint of putting on her glasses, but I guessed that she did it only to gain time. She seemed much moved when she opened the book and saw the name. She looked paler than usual, and she did not answer Paul till he repeated his question.

"Whose book was this, my father's?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever live here?"

"Yes."

"When? For how long? Will you tell me about him?" He added, "I must not tease you with questions, but there are some things that I must know. I have been thinking about them for years. Will you please tell me, Aunt Wendover?"

"Sometime I will, but not now."

"When will you tell me?"

"When you are twenty-one. Don't ask me any more questions now, for I shall not answer them.

"Over six years to wait!" Paul sighed. "One thing more, Aunt Wendover, please. Am I any relation of yours?"

"No."

"Of Agnes'?"

"No."

"Then I haven't any relatives. Did mamma ever live here?"

"No."

"Did you know her?"

"No. Don't ask me anything more. When you are twenty-one you shall know all that I know." She spoke decidedly, but not unkindly.

"I am sorry," said Paul sadly.

"About what, Paul?"

"I am sorry that I am no relation of yours. It seems queer to belong to no one!"

He went to the window, and stood partially hidden by the curtains. I felt like sobbing out of sympathy for him, if Aunt Wendover had not been there.

At last she spoke. "Paul, you shall never miss your relatives. As long as I live, you need not lack for a friend. There are reasons why I shall always wish to keep you with me. Call me Aunt Wendover just as Agnes does."

"Is Agnes really your niece?" Paul asked.

"Yes," my aunt replied, and I fancied that

she wished that Paul and I could change places.

Presently he turned away from the window, and, seeing a pained look upon Aunt Wendover's face, he said, "I am sorry if I have hurt you with my questions. Forgive me!"

"You need not ask that, you have done no harm. Put the book away, or keep it if you like; but don't speak to me of anything you see."

I think that both of them had forgotten my presence. I slipped away, and left them together.

Paul succeeded finely with the organ on the following Sabbath. I was a little nervous; but he seemed perfectly cool. How he played that day! I shall never again hear music that can affect me as that did. I suppose I disgraced myself by wiping my eyes all through the service. I was very proud of Paul, and I wished for Aunt Wendover.

We usually spent the hours between morning and evening service with the Barnhams, and we went home with them that day. Somehow, that Sabbath stands out in my memory with that Sabbath when Paul and I joined the church. After dinner we strolled in the sweet-scented, old-fashioned garden, sometimes resting on one of the rustic seats, sometimes pick-

ing fruit from the trees that lined the walks. Mr. Grey came to tea, and then we seemed quite complete.

There was something very sweet and simple about the Barnham home. Wendover House was ten times as grand, but it lacked a certain nameless charm. For me, no rich repast could equal Mrs. Barnham's simple tea-table with its spotless linen, its flowered china painted by the same hands that had moulded the bread. The vase of flowers, the bowl of berries, and the pitcher of cream, all seemed perfect. Peace brooded over the little house, there were no mysteries, no skeletons hiding in closets. And then the conversation that went on there! No wonder that Sunday was a blessed day to me, a green oasis in the midst of a long week.

After supper Paul played, and the others sang. Only I sat apart, but perhaps I made melody in my heart. After the singing, it was time to go to church, and we all went together. Mr. Grey always preached in the evening. I loved to hear his deep voice in the reading and the prayer, and when the organ chimed in, it seemed indeed that the Lord was in his holy temple.

All the way home, Paul sang one of the hymns of the evening, Keble's lovely words,

"Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour, dear,"

set to a sweet tune that was a great favorite of ours. As the boat touched the wharf, Paul's hand clasped mine.

"Hasn't this been a lovely Sunday, Agnes?" he asked.

"Yes, lovely; I shall always remember it," I said.

Aunt Wendover stood on the balcony waiting for us, and I knew she was anxious to hear how Paul had acquitted himself.

"It is all right, auntie Wendover," he called, and she looked relieved.

Mr. Eliot was absent for several Sabbaths, and Paul filled his place. I think he was sorry when the organist came back, but he went over to the church several times each week, and had what he called a "grand practice."

About this time he fitted up a little octagonal room in the tower. I called it the study, but he named it the den. He had his favorite books there, his beloved violin, his drawing apparatus, and a desk for his papers. For he began to have a good many papers now, and they were not merely exercises. Sometimes he showed me a brief sketch, a bit of a poem, or a score or two of music he had composed. Already, the creative instinct was at work in him, boy as he was. And I, who had no gifts, admired what I believed to be his genius.

Paul could have been prepared for college at sixteen, but Aunt Wendover, desirous of putting off the evil day of his leaving, insisted that he must wait a year, when he would be stronger. Accordingly, he spent the year in an easy review of his studies with Mr. Grey, for he had left school. With the exception of a couple of hours spent with Mr. Grey every morning, he was at home all the time.

Once when Paul was wishing for some old costumes, Aunt Wendover gave him the keys and told him to look in the attic chambers. They proved a perfect treasure house for us, and we ransacked old stores of old furniture, old costumes, old papers and letters and all the interesting rubbish of a dozen generations of Wendovers. For nothing ever was destroyed; a thing that had belonged to a Wendover was too sacred to be thrown away; consequently one might read the history of the family in its relics. After we had exhausted the resources of the garret, it was but a step to the roof, which was flat, and then we had a glorious view of all the surrounding country. Often we would spend whole days there, Paul with a book and I with my sewing. We seemed to breathe more freely there, and we used our house-top quite in an oriental fashion.

Our conversation usually ended by my say-

ing, "O Paul, what shall I do without you those four long years?"

And he would say, "There, Agnes, don't think about it yet. When I do go I shall write often, and I shall come home three times a year. It won't be so terrible, will it?"

Not for him, perhaps, I thought. But those who stay at home feel the separation more.

The year passed, much as I should have liked to keep it, and Paul left home for his first term at college. He seemed happy and content, and I was glad to know it, though I could have wished that he missed me more. I hardly know how I lived through those first weary months. The worst of it was, I felt that from that time Paul would never be the same to us, that the Island could never again suffice for him. I knew that he would have new friends and new interests, and that our delightful boy and girl life was at an end. I had nothing to look forward to. I had no hope of getting away, no new scenes opened up before me. And when one has nothing to look forward to, one has indeed fallen upon evil times.

Another thing made my life unusually hard. As soon as Paul was gone, Aunt Wendover seemed the same person I had known before Paul came to the Island. I was only Agnes, and she did not care to take any trouble for my

sake. She did not scold me, though sometimes I wished she would; I grew so tired of the silence between us.

Mrs. Barnham once told my aunt that she ought to send me away to school that I might have the society of girls of my own age. But Aunt Wendover never heeded the suggestion. There I stayed, the dull days only broken by Paul's letters, which were a great comfort to me.

He came home for a short visit at Christmas, and that summer we had him all to ourselves for three precious months. Paul was unchanged; of that I was joyously sure, and I enjoyed those pleasant summer days to the utmost. I never grew weary of his stories of college-life. I knew his friends nearly as well as if I had seen them, and I was interested in his studies, his recreations, and all that was dear to his heart.

The sweet summer went by all too soon, and again I was left alone with Aunt Wendover.

Aunt Wendover used to lose all patience with my moping, and she sometimes reproved me sharply, telling me that I was silly, that I couldn't always expect to have Paul at my beck and call, and she should think that I could see that it was best for him to be away. She would finish by quoting, "Home-keeping youth have

ever homely wits," and asked me if I wanted Paul to appear awkward and countrified. I knew he could never be either, and while I did wish him to have all that could make life a success, it was no wonder that I missed him, the only person who really loved me.

After awhile it was quite a usual thing for one of Paul's friends to accompany him when he came home; for Aunt Wendover would have invited the sphinx if she thought the visit would give Paul pleasure. I stood quite in awe of the strange young men, and they took little notice of me, for which I was thankful.

I was surprised at Aunt Wendover, for she made a charming hostess. She was very pleasant and cordial, and she did all in her power to give Paul's guests an enjoyable visit.

One young man, George Stuart by name, came oftener than any of the others, and the more he came, the less I liked him. I used to wonder what attracted Paul to him, for he seemed perfectly infatuated with Mr. Stuart, and he was completely under his influence. I often felt a pang of jealousy that Paul could think so much of any stranger. But I tried hard not to grudge his friends the attention he paid them, though I could not help looking forward to the time when they should leave, and I could have Paul to myself.

Aunt Wendover always seemed pleasant with his company. She liked George Stuart especially well, and she encouraged Paul's intimacy with him. I could not understand why she did so, for I had a feeling that he would never do Paul any good. But Stuart was of an aristocratic family, and she wanted Paul to have influential friends. As for Stuart, he often told Paul that he envied him his fairy god-mother. That was his name for Aunt Wendover because she lavished everything upon Paul.

I think Paul asked Aunt Wendover to be more considerate of my feelings, for after he went back to college she snubbed me less than usual. If she had been kind and companionable, I might have found life a very different thing. But I had ceased to hope for that. My only pleasure was the society of the Barnhams, and I would not go to their house as often as I wished to, for fear they would tire of me. Besides, Aunt Wendover disliked to have me go, and I would not displease her too often, even for the sake of visiting dear Mrs. Barnham.

CHAPTER XII.

AGNES' STORY.

Lancelot: "I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise from the heart, and not by no constraint."

King Arthur: "That is true, love is free in himself, and never will be bounden; for where he is bounden he looseth himself."

THE years seemed to drag slowly enough, but they went by till one morning I realized that I was twenty years old. I was a woman, surely; but I was so plain and little that I might have passed for four years younger. Indeed, my dress was so simple and childish that no one would have thought me more than a school-girl. I never cared about my dress, except to have it neat, for I had little or no pride in self-adornment. But Paul often noticed the deficiencies in my wardrobe, and then I saw them myself.

I remember just how I spent that birthday. I woke early, and after I had dressed myself I sat down in my room, thinking as I had never thought before. What did my life mean? I asked myself. Why was I put into the world?

Other people had accomplished so much at twenty, and I had done nothing. Nor was there any prospect of my doing anything, so there was no comfort to be gained from trying to pry into the future.

As my aunt and I sat over our late breakfast, Hawkins brought in the mail. I had a letter from Paul, also a tiny package, for he never forgot to notice my birthday. It was a slender bracelet set with tiny gems. As I slipped it on my wrist, my aunt asked, "What have you there?"

"It is Paul's present. It is my birthday, you know."

"No, I did not know; or, at least, I had forgotten. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Is it possible?" she said, putting on her spectacles. "You don't look it. I was more of a woman at fourteen. But I suppose you are right in your reckoning. I presume I ought to give you a present. Tell me what you wish and you shall have it."

"Thank you, Aunt Wendover, but I don't think I want anything," I said. And I told the truth.

"I should like to spend the day with Mrs. Barnham, if you have no objections," I said presently.

"I have no objections. You are old enough to think for yourself, Agnes, and you need not ask me about everything you do."

Aunt Wendover arose and went to her secretary, and counting out some bills, handed them to me. "You ought to have some money of your own," she said. "Paul has had an allowance for a long time. But you have stayed so closely on the Island that I forgot that you might need money. Here are a hundred dollars to start with, and on the first day of every month, I will pay you twenty-five dollars. I expect you to buy your clothes with it, but I shall not ask you how you spend it. Perhaps you had better do some shopping to-day. I dare say Mrs. Barnham will assist you. I believe your wardrobe needs attention, and I don't wish you to appear shabby. I forgot that you are no longer a school-girl. You are a young lady, and you must dress like one."

"But, aunt," I said, "I don't need so much money. I don't know what to do with it."

"Then it is quite time you learned how to use money. Do as you please with it, but don't trouble me."

I made myself ready to go to Mrs. Barnham's, and I spent the whole day there. It was early when I reached the house, and she was busied with her morning duties. I followed her

from kitchen to pantry, helping her when she would allow me to. I was of a domestic turn, and I dearly loved the mysteries of housekeeping. But at home I never was allowed to do anything of the kind. My aunt wished me to keep away from the kitchen, and Betsey, the old cook, would tolerate no one but Paul in her domain. Even when Paul used to sit on her table and appropriate bits of dough, he was suffered to remain. But, then, he was Paul, a privileged person.

When Mrs. Barnham and I sat down to rest, I said, "Mrs. Barnham, Aunt Wendover gave me a hundred dollars this morning, and I don't know what to do with it all."

Mrs. Barnham laughed merrily. "Well, Agnes, that amuses me! That is never my complaint, or Jack's either. We have so little that we are obliged to spend some time in planning what we need most. Though we do manage to get along quite comfortably, in spite of poverty."

"Why, Mrs. Barnham!" I cried. "I think you have a lovely home. I think you and the doctor ought to be the happiest people in the world."

"We are happy, and I ought to be ashamed to mention such a paltry thing as money. Some day, Agnes, I hope you will have as happy a

home as mine. But would you be contented in such a life? This house isn't much like Wendover House."

"Oh it is so sweet and lovely here; but at home everything is gloomy and queer! No, no, anything like this is not for me."

"My dear Agnes," said Mrs. Barnham, taking my face between her hands, and kissing me; "My dear Agnes."

I could not think why she should kiss me just then, but I was glad that she loved me so well.

"But let us talk about that dreadful hundred dollars," said Mrs. Barnham, laughing again. "What does Miss Wendover wish you to do with it?"

"She does not care, though she suggested that I might need some new clothes."

"Sensible suggestion! I am tired of seeing our Agnes such a dull bird. You can buy a great many pretty things with that money."

"And I am to have an allowance of twenty-five dollars every month. I am sure I shall not know how to use it all. You must help me, Mrs. Barnham."

"I promise. We'll go shopping this very afternoon."

And shopping we went. Mrs. Barnham was in her element, turning over pretty fabrics, and

flying from counter to counter. Some of the things she selected were too bright for me, and I made her compromise for something less gay. At nightfall we went home, laden down with our purchases, and quite fatigued with our afternoon's work.

We found the doctor waiting for us. He was sitting in the porch, and Mr. Grey was with him. Mr. Grey said he had been visiting in the parish till he was tired, and he begged Mrs. Barnham for a cup of tea. He stayed to tea, and we had a merry time. Mrs. Barnham spoke of my sudden accession of wealth, and the doctor chaffed me about my purchases, and affected much curiosity concerning certain bundles that were on the piano.

The very next week a strange thing happened. If I had not been so blind, I suppose I might have seen it coming long before; but I was blind, blind as a mole. So I could not help being startled, not to say shocked, when Mr. Grey spoke to me so plainly one day. I supposed that he liked me, as Mr. and Mrs. Barnham did. I never dreamed that he loved me, plain, shy little Agnes Wendover. I was perfectly innocent of his intentions, and yet I could not help blaming myself for my dullness.

It all happened one afternoon when he came to the Island. I was playing, and feeling very

sad and dispirited, when Barbara came and said that Mr. Grey wished to see me. I was glad to hear that he was there, for I was unusually lonely that afternoon, and I always enjoyed a talk with him. He came so seldom when Paul was away, that I supposed he had some message for me from Mrs. Barnham or the doctor. He stayed a long time, talking much more than usual, for he was rather a silent man. All at once his tone changed, and he told me that he loved me and wanted me to be his wife. Such an idea had never entered my mind, and I could scarcely believe my ears. I looked at him to see if he could be jesting, but he was only too much in earnest. He went on talking so tenderly and kindly that I thought my heart would break. I knew at once that it could not be, and I tried to tell him so, but it seemed so heartless to keep repeating my foolish words that I was sorry that I could not love him. At last I fell into a helpless fit of crying, and he said no more. He took my hand, saying with much feeling, "Agnes, I do not want you to give yourself one sad moment on my account. The mistake was mine, so let me bear all the suffering. I will never speak of this again; but if the time ever comes when you feel differently toward me, will you let me know? I

am sure that I shall not change. Promise me this, Agnes, and God bless you!"

I promised him, and he went away. I watched his boat as long as I could, and then I went to my room to have my cry out. As I lay with my face buried in the pillow, I tried to reason with myself. There was no one in the world whom I respected more highly or admired more than Mr. Grey, and there was no one else so worthy, so good, so patient. He had stooped to ask me to be his wife, and I, poor, miserable little worm that I was, could not love him.

I dried my eyes and went down when the dinner-bell rang, not because I felt like eating, but because I never dared absent myself from the table. My aunt must have noticed my red eyes and swollen features, for she glanced sharply at me, as I took my seat, though she made no remarks. As we left the dining-room I said,

"Aunt Wendover, if you are not too busy, I should like to see you alone by-and-by."

"You may come to my room when you like," was her reply.

I spent a few moments in screwing up my courage before I entered her room. Then I stood upon the hearth-rug nervously twisting my handkerchief.

"Aunt Wendover," I began at last, desperately pitching into the subject, "Mr. Grey was here this afternoon, and—and—he asked me to marry him!"

It was out at last, and I turned to see how my aunt took my news.

"Well!" was her comment, and I thought she looked pleased as she surveyed me from the comb in my hair to the bows on my slippers.

"He is a fine young man, and it will be an excellent thing for you, Agnes."

"But, Aunt Wendover, I don't love him, and I told him that I could not marry him," I said, for her matter-of-course manner frightened me.

"You can't, eh? What do you know about love, a chit of a girl that has been mewed up on an Island all your life? I have seen this coming for some time, and I was rather glad of it. I supposed that you would be ready to jump at the chance of being a minister's wife. But it seems that there is no accounting for the freaks of girls. What do you expect to do? You can't make a fine match, for although you have improved much, you are a plain girl."

I could not help wincing at her words. I had told myself a hundred times that I was

plain, even homely, but I did not like to hear her say it.

"I have thought a good deal about your future, Agnes," my aunt went on, "and I was glad to think that you would have such an excellent chance of marriage. I thought that you were one of the kind who would marry, for you seem to be a dependent creature."

"I don't wish to marry, Aunt Wendover, I don't indeed."

"Humph!" was her retort. "Have you ever thought of what was to become of you after I am gone? For I don't expect to live forever. I want to see you settled in life, for when I am dead you will have no relative in the world. The Wendovers have all died out, except one branch of cousins, and we have had no intercourse for many years."

"I don't wish to be a burden to you, Aunt," I faltered, for the future seemed very barren to me. "If you are willing, I will try to earn my own living."

"What on earth could you do?" she asked. "I don't grudge you the food you eat, or the bed you sleep in. Besides, there is money enough. Your father squandered all he had in riotous living, and then sent a penniless orphan for me to care for. That is the way of the world. One wastes, and another wants. How-

ever, I don't mind the money, though people think me close. So you think you can't love Mr. Grey. Love! Nonsense! However, I don't think he will live long. Dr. Barnham has always been afraid that he has consumption. So perhaps it is just as well that you don't want to marry him."

I went back to my room feeling miserable enough, after the little cold comfort I got from Aunt Wendover. I was half afraid that my refusal would hasten Mr. Grey's end, and I almost hated myself because I must inflict pain upon so good a man.

CHAPTER XIII.

AGNES' STORY.

"I do not like thee, Doctor Fell—
The reason why I cannot tell;
But this alone I know full well,
I do not like thee, Doctor Fell."

I WAS not very well the following spring, and I could not account for the feeling of lassitude that took hold of me; for I had never been sickly. I cared about nothing, I went nowhere. I used to lie on my bed with my eyes closed, while the days dragged by without anything happening. Aunt Wendover sometimes told me that I did not take sufficient exercise, and she advised me to take a brisk run down to the shore. I tried to obey her, but my gait was anything but brisk.

Paul came home in June, and he was scarcely in the house before he saw how poorly I looked. He called Aunt Wendover's attention to me, and she admitted that I had moped a great deal for several months, and she said she hoped I would act like myself again now that he was home. Paul made no reply. He put

on his hat and left the house. When he came back a little later, Dr. Barnham was with him.

"Now, doctor," I began, "what has Paul been telling you?"

"That is none of your affair, young lady," he said, shaking his head at me. He drew a chair up by my lounge, and began questioning me. I answered him, all the while protesting that I was not ill, only tired and nervous.

"Agnes Wendover, I feel like scolding you," he said. "Here you have been running down all these weeks, and you said nothing to your old doctor. Do you know what is the matter with you?"

"No," I said, hardly knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"Well, you are on the verge of nervous prostration! Only tired and nervous, eh! I'm angry at you. Do you know what I am going to do with you? I am going to pack you off to the mountains next week. There, I won't hear a word against it. Nellie and Paul are going with you, unless your aunt will go. How is it, Miss Wendover?"

"I think I won't go, if Mrs. Barnham is willing to go with her. You are quite right. Agnes must go away for a change. I had no idea she was so run down, for she did not complain."

Aunt Wendover seemed really frightened about me, and she was anxious to get us started for the mountains. Paul had already arranged everything with Mrs. Barnham, and they had agreed upon a mountain resort at some distance. Paul's friend, Stuart, was to be there a little later with his sister. Paul said he had met her often, and he wanted me to know her.

Paul managed affairs so quickly that before I knew it, we were settled in one of the prettiest places imaginable. I felt very peaceful when I lay down in my little room under the shadow of the hills.

"Hills draw like heaven," Mrs. Browning wrote, and I think I understood her meaning for the first time, for I had never seen mountains before. Indeed, it was my second outing; for excepting that one visit to the sea-shore years before, I had hardly been out of sight of the smoke from the Wendover chimneys.

I gained strength before long, and I felt so much happier at once, that Paul seemed delighted with the success of his experiment. After a while I was able to ramble around with him, and I enjoyed having him all to myself once more. We fished in the mountain streams, geologized and botanized, and romped like two children. I forgot the Agnes Wendover who

had troubles that made her head ache, I was the child Agnes again.

After a while the Stuarts came, and we were obliged to be more conventional. They were with us constantly, and I can't say that I relished the change they made. I hardly knew what to think of Cecil Stuart, but she seemed to like me very much. She was quite a study to me, with her airs and graces, her Frenchy toilets, and her wonderful crown of golden hair. She looked something like Paul, for she was tall and graceful, blue-eyed, and exceedingly fair. She was an accomplished musician, and she and Paul were always singing together. Somehow, they were constantly together, and for the first time I realized how much of a man Paul was. He appeared so easy in the society we met, that I felt my own awkwardness the more. I used to watch the others, and wish that I could say bright things, and be at ease as they were. But try as I would, I could not. I was made in a different mould. I thought more slowly, I was only dull little Agnes Wendover. I knew it was quite natural that Cecil and Paul should drift together, both being young and beautiful. I usually kept close by dear Mrs. Barnham, and watched the others, unless Mr. Stuart came to my corner to talk to me. I wished that he would not feel obliged

to pay me any attention; for I knew he did it merely out of politeness. He must have found me dull.

We spent July there, then Mrs. Barnham began to talk of returning. I was much improved, and I felt quite ready to go back to the Island. Indeed, I wanted to creep into my own little room and think. So we left, Paul making arrangements with the Stuarts to visit us at the Island toward the last of August.

Aunt Wendover greeted me pleasantly. She hoped I was not very tired from my journey, and she remarked that I looked much better. I went to my room quite overcome by the cordiality of my welcome, for everybody seemed glad to meet me. The servants all smiled and asked if I were well again, and the dogs ran to meet me. Barbara had taken the trouble to gather a bunch of sweet peas and place them in a jar on my mantel. It was the first time any one had put flowers in my room, and the little attention pleased me.

After dinner, Paul and I strolled down to the shore, and stayed there, watching the moon rise over the water.

"Lonely, Agnes?" he asked, throwing himself down on the grass.

"No," I said. "I was just thinking how pleasant the Island is now."

"It is pleasant, and I hate to think of leaving it so soon. However, there is but one year more."

"And after that?" I asked.

"I don't know, Agnes. I tell you frankly that I haven't made up my mind what I am to do with myself. I am ashamed that I have no plans, when so many of the fellows have their professions chosen. I used to think that I would stay home awhile and study medicine with Dr. Barnham."

"You could do a great deal of good as a doctor. But do you know, Paul, I always thought that you would devote yourself either to literature or music."

"I don't know, Agnes; my efforts seem very childish to me. I am afraid that in neither literature nor music I would do anything worthy the name of art. Perhaps I have nothing but an intense love for them, and no talent."

"I think you have great gifts, and I don't see any reason why you should not do something worth doing," I said. "I wish this year was over."

"I almost wish it too, but I enjoy myself at college. I shall be glad to get home on your account, for I know you are lonely. You really ought to go out more, Agnes. As Aunt Wendover says, you mope too much. It will do you

good to have the Stuarts here. I asked them partly on your account. I thought you would like Cecil."

I couldn't think of anything to say just then. I couldn't tell Paul that I was glad that his friends were coming, and I wouldn't tell him that I was sorry. I sighed, I couldn't help it.

Paul looked up quickly. "What is that sigh for?" he asked.

"I was thinking of Cecil, how handsome she is. It must be lovely to know that it is a pleasure for people to look at you," I said, because I wanted to say something in praise of Cecil, and I could truthfully say that she was handsome.

"Agnes, you need not envy Cecil or any one else," said Paul kindly. "You always look very pretty to me."

"There is nothing to be said for my looks, so I wish you would not try to be complimentary, Paul. I am 'too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise.' I wonder that I am so small and insignificant, for the Wendovers are a tall, handsome race."

"I think she can't help liking it here," said Paul absently.

"Who?" I asked.

"Cecil," he replied, in a matter-of-course

way, as if there was only one person to be thought of.

I bit my lip, but said nothing. I counted the days that would elapse before the Stuarts would come, and I was sorry to find them so few. I sat quietly, watching the moon as it rose over the spires of the city across the water. Paul seemed busied with his thoughts, for he lay with his hands clasped under his head, and he was silent for a long time.

At last he seemed to recall himself, and he rose, saying, "Well, Agnes, the moon is up. Let's go in and see Aunt Wendover. I suppose she will think we are very unsocial."

We went into the drawing-room, and Paul threw open the shutters to let the moonlight in, for he never liked lights. He sat down to the piano and began to play. I was always happy when he played, and to-night the spirit of harmony seemed to take possession of him. More than once I saw Aunt Wendover wipe her eyes, and I fancied that Paul was playing something that she had been familiar with years before. There were several pieces that he played that seemed to affect her more than others, and one day I knew why it was so.

It was only a little while till the Stuarts came, but I think that Paul was lonely in the intervening time.

Cecil was more dazzling than ever, and she seemed delighted with everything she saw. I went to show her to her room, and waited at her request while she changed her travelling dress for a dainty gown. I watched her while she arranged her crimps, and smoothed her drapery, and settled her sash. I thought how I could have made my toilet in a quarter of that time, though I should not have looked as she did when all was done, for she looked like a picture. Just as we were ready to go down, Miller knocked, saying that Miss Wendover had sent her to ask if she could give any assistance. Fancy Miller, who gave herself airs, coming to wait on me! But for the rest of Cecil's stay Aunt Wendover managed without her services, and she devoted herself to our guest.

The house seemed transformed that night. The table bore its best service of china and silver, and the parlors were stripped of the brown holland covering that usually protected the furniture. Of course there was music and much lively conversation, and I was obliged to confess that Miss Stuart was charming.

Aunt Wendover, usually so chary of praise, pronounced Cecil a "fine girl," and she treated her with much consideration. For Aunt Wendover could be very elegant when she chose. Cecil was very kind to me. She always said,

"Agnes," and she insisted that I must call her Cecil. I felt ashamed that I did not like her better; but try as I would, I could not conquer my dislike, and I would not feign what I did not feel.

She seemed to enjoy herself on the Island, and I think the novelty of everything caught her fancy. She certainly made the dull house brighter by her presence. I could hear her humming snatches of songs wherever she was, and she was always leaving some of her pretty belongings around. Perhaps it was disorderly, but it was such a pretty disorder that no one felt like criticising her. She would leave a little work basket full of dainty embroidery in the broad window seat, a fleecy cloud she called a wrap would hang on a chair, and perhaps a bunch of flowers from her belt would lay on the carpet. And she herself, in her pretty gowns, was the brightest thing of all.

Here, too, Paul and she were always together, always playing and singing, and there I sat with my mute voice, and all the music within me that must remain unexpressed.

I could not help being glad when our guests went away, and the household fell into its ordinary routine. A few days later, Paul went back to college, and I settled myself to bear the long months to come.

The time would not have seemed so long if I had had some regular employment, but there was nothing for me to do. I had long ceased reciting to my governess, and my education was supposed to be finished. I read, sewed a little, and sketched, or practiced music to pass the time. I went to Mrs. Barnham's a great deal, and helped her make clothes for her poor people. I couldn't do much cutting and planning, but she had a wonderful knack for such things. She did most of the work, and I used to take some of the plain sewing home with me. I had plenty of money to spare from my allowance, so I helped her in buying material. I did not know what else to do with it, and I was glad that I could help a little.

I used to see Mr. Grey occasionally at the doctor's, for it could not well be avoided. His manner was perfectly natural, and I sometimes wondered if I had not dreamed the whole affair. It always seemed so strange that a man like him should care for a girl like me! Sometimes I wished that my feelings could change, since he wished it; but it could not be. I had never told Paul about my romance, for I felt that it would be a breach of faith. It was the first secret I ever had from him, and it weighed on my conscience.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAUL'S STORY.

I have unclasped
To thee the book even of my secret soul.
Shakespeare.

HOW often Agnes and I used to talk about the mysteries of Wendover House. For there were many strange things, and strangest of all, was the mystery about myself. I used to lie awake many nights, thinking of my father and mother. I was certain that Aunt Wendover knew all, for she had intimated as much, but beyond the promise to tell me everything when I should be twenty-one, she would say nothing. I was nearly consumed with curiosity, but I gave her my promise not to ask any questions. As my twenty-first birthday drew near, I thought a great deal about her promise. I could not wait till the next vacation, so I took a flying trip home. They were surprised to see me, though I think that Aunt Wendover knew why I came. On my birthday morning I went down to breakfast wondering when she would tell me about myself.

She looked pale and worn when she entered the dining-room, and I guessed that there was something painful in the past. I pitied her, but I felt that I had a right to know my history; it was my due. Agnes, too, was almost as eager as I was, and I promised her that she should know all that Aunt Wendover should tell me. I loitered about the house all the morning, hoping to be summoned to Aunt Wendover, but the morning passed, and nothing was said.

But as Aunt Wendover left the dining-room after lunch, she said, "Paul, you may come to me in my boudoir in a half hour."

I was punctual to a minute, but as I knocked at her door there was no answer. I gently pushed it open, and found, to my alarm, that my aunt was lying on the floor in a swoon. I raised her, brought water from the dressing-room, and at last succeeded in restoring her.

"Don't call any one, Paul," she said, as soon as she could speak; "I will be better soon."

I fanned her while she rested on the sofa, and she soon was herself again. She put out her hand and stroked my hair, for I was kneeling beside her.

"You want to hear about your father, Paul?" she said.

"Yes, Aunt Wendover, if you feel able to talk."

"I can, for I must. It is quite time that I told you."

She closed her eyes again, and lay without speaking, and her face wore a tortured expression that I could not bear to see.

Again I said, "Don't, Aunt Wendover, if it hurts you so to tell it."

"Perhaps if you would ask me questions I could tell it more easily," she said.

I was only too glad of the permission. "How long did you know papa?" I began.

"From the time he came here at five years old, till he left at twenty-five. Twenty years in all."

"He was not related to you? I remember you told me that he was not."

"No, he was not. He was a ward of my father's, the child of a dear friend. He called my father Uncle Hugh, just as you call me Aunt Wendover."

"Aunt Wendover, what is your christian name? I know you must have one, but I never heard it."

"Yes, I have one, or I used to have. I was named Alicia, but it was painful to hear it when all I loved were gone, so except to you and Agnes, I am Miss Wendover."

"How did papa look. I remember him best after he was worn and ill. Poor papa!" As I spoke, I saw that she began to tremble again.

"Go to that closet and bring out a picture that hangs there. Here is the key," she said.

I opened the door, and stood before one of the mysteries of Wendover House—the crape-covered picture that had haunted Agnes' childhood. All at once I began to understand some things, and I guessed whose was the face that Aunt Wendover had called the falsest and fairest in the world. I carried the picture out and leaned it against the wall. "Am I to take off the covering?" I asked.

"Of course. You can't see through it, can you?" my aunt asked sharply. "You'll find a pair of scissors in the work-basket."

I needed no second bidding. I worked fast, and great drops of perspiration ran down my face. After the threads were out, I waited a minute, longing, yet dreading to raise the crape. A half-suppressed sob from Aunt Wendover made me look around. She had risen to her feet, and she seemed about to fall. I sprang to her side.

"Give me your arm, Paul, and let us look at the picture together. For twenty-five years I have not looked at that face."

I raised the crape. As I thought, the face

was my father's. I should have known it anywhere, though he looked much younger and stronger than I remembered him I led Aunt Wendover back to her chair, and she said, "Go on with your questions, Paul. The worst is over now."

"Why is that picture covered with crape?" was the first question that rose to my lips.

"Because my father sent Paul away in anger. He said that he was dead to us, and he ordered the crape put on."

"But, Aunt Wendover, why was your father angry with mine? Papa could not do anything wrong."

"You are right, Paul. He could not. The trouble all came through a misunderstanding. Paul, I loved him!"

I had the clue now. "O Aunt Wendover!" I cried, "O Aunt Wendover!"

"It was not his fault. Everyone had to love him, for he had a very winning disposition, and though he was manly, he was as gentle as a woman. We were brought up as brother and sister, and it was my fault if I mistook his brotherly affection for something deeper and stronger. My father had an iron will, and he thought that everything must go according to his wishes. My brother Robert, Agnes' father, had offended him, and he wanted Paul to take

the Wendover name and marry me. Oh! how often I have deplored that unbridled temper of my father's! But I must go on with my story, and a shameful one it is! Your father was traveling with Dr. Barnham when he met your mother and loved her. My father was furious when he heard of it, and there was a terrible scene that I cannot forget to this day. He drove Paul away, and I never saw him again."

She waited a few moments, and then went on. "It was all owing to that Wendover will that would not be thwarted. We all had it, my father, Robert, and I. Sometimes I am not sorry that the name is dying out. Agnes is the last of the family, and she is only a woman. But I must hurry, and get done, for it is not pleasant to tell such things. I felt bitterly enough toward Paul, and my father nursed and fed my anger till it was almost as fierce as his. Father sent Paul's little fortune to him, and he made me swear that none of the Wendover money should ever go to him, no matter how much he needed it. I have been so sorry that I obeyed him, and I can't be glad enough that he did not make me promise that I would never help Paul's children. Sometimes I feel that I am making some poor amends to Paul by trying to be good to you."

"O Aunt Wendover!" I said, "you are

good to me. You have showed me nothing but kindness all these years."

"Is that true, Paul? Have I never left undone something that might have made you happier."

"I wish you would be kinder to Agnes," I said. "Treat her as well as you treat me."

"I'll try to do better, Paul; but I never loved Agnes as I love you. At first she was not lovable, and I fancied that she had inherited deceit and treachery from her Italian mother. But I see nothing of that now, and I do feel more kindly toward her."

"Aunt Wendover, what do you know about my mother?"

"Almost nothing, Paul. Of course, I never saw her. Dr. Barnham knew her, and you may ask him anything you wish. He loved your father, and he knows more of our family affairs than anyone else does. When you want a friend you may place implicit confidence in him."

"How did you come to take me here, Aunt Wendover?"

"Your father wrote, asking me to take you. I could not send for you before he died, but I think he was content, and satisfied that I would care for you. You may see his letter, if you like. It is not written very plainly; I suppose it is the last bit of writing he ever did."

She opened the secretary, and took out a letter, yellowed by time. It was scarcely legible; he must have been very feeble, poor papa! But I made out to read it.

"DEAR ALICIA,—"I am dying, and I must ask you to befriend my child, my little Paul. Perhaps I am overbold to ask all this, but I feel sure that for the sake of our own childhood you will care for my boy. You cannot help loving him, and I hope he will be a blessing to you. His mother has been at rest for two years, and I shall join her very soon. Tell Paul as much or as little of the past as you think best. Make a good man of him, and God will surely bless you.

"Yours for the last time,
"Paul."

"Aunt Wendover, did papa leave any money?" I asked.

"No, Paul. I hate to tell you, but he died in an almshouse. He had no other refuge, and he was unable to work. Can you forgive me for being rich when he had no place to lay his head?"

I did not answer her at once. I had never realized that the place where we stayed during his last days was an almshouse.

Aunt Wendover must have thought that I was not ready to forgive her, for she put out her hand and clutched my sleeve. "Paul, you must, you must forgive me," she pleaded.

"I do, Aunt Wendover, I do. I think that

your loving care of me must have atoned for any wrong you did."

"Thank you, Paul. I am glad you can say that."

"Then all the money that I have been spending so freely was yours," I said, going back to the subject I had left.

"Yes, but don't think about it. There is money enough, and I don't value it very highly. It has never done me any good, and sometimes I think it is cursed. I shall be glad when some one manages it who will spend it more wisely than I have done. I shall make you my heir, Paul."

"No, no, that would not be right," I said, thinking of Agnes. "I am not of your blood. and Agnes is your own niece."

"Of course I shall provide for Agnes. But she can never keep the property as I have done. It will take a man to do that."

"But I can never take it from Agnes. I am a man, and I can earn a place for myself in the world."

"What shall you do?" Aunt Wendover asked, half smiling at my boastful language.

"I don't know yet. Shall you mind if I take time to see what I want to do?"

"Of course not. Should you like to travel, to see the world?"

"Dearly! I have always wished to travel. But it will cost a great deal, and you have done so much for me already, Aunt Wendover."

"Never mind the cost. You shall have all the money you want. You may go where you please, and stay as long as you like. Of course I shall miss you, but I want you to have the best of everything in the world, and nothing else gives the culture that travel brings. You have pleased me very much during your college course, and I want to please you now."

"Thank you very much, Aunt Wendover. Then when I finish college I shall set out on my travels," I cried, pleased at the prospect. "You are very, very good to me, Aunt Wendover."

I rose and stood looking at my father's picture.

"You are very like him," Aunt Wendover said.

"I know I am. I can't look like mamma, for she was dark-eyed like Agnes, and she had dark curls. I wish I had a picture of her."

"You may take your father's picture and hang it in your den if you like."

"Thank you. I want it where I can look at it every day."

"Then all is right between us at last, Paul?"

"Yes, Aunt Wendover."

"I am a hard old woman, but you have showed me that I have a heart. You have been a blessing to me, as the other Paul said you would, and I hope we shall yet be very happy together. Kiss me, Paul."

It was the first time she had ever asked me to kiss her, and I was glad she did. I kissed her twice, and she laid her hand on my head, with a caressing touch.

"Try to love the old woman a little," she said, "for she loves you."

"I do love you, Aunt Wendover, I have always loved you." And I kissed her pale cheek again. "Aunt Wendover," I asked, "do you mind my telling Agnes what you have told me? I never have any secrets from her."

"No, tell her as much as you wish," she said, closing her eyes wearily.

I left her alone, for I could see that she was tired. I took my precious portrait to my den and hung it above my writing-table, then I went in search of Agnes. I found her sewing in the breakfast-room, and I called her to come to the tower, for I had a secret to tell her.

Her eyes rested on the strange picture the instant she entered the room. "It must be your father, Paul," she said, "for you look exactly like the picture."

"It is my father, Agnes. Aunt Wendover

has told me everything. Sit down, and I will tell you."

"Poor Aunt Wendover!" Agnes said when I finished. "I didn't know that she ever loved anyone. No wonder she loves you, Paul. I can understand a great many things now."

"So can I. And, Agnes, she thinks a good deal of you; she said so this morning," I said, and if I stretched her words a little, I could not be sorry, for the pleased look that came on Agnes' face was good to see.

CHAPTER XV.

AGNES' STORY.

If he has friends that love him,
'Twill set them weeping all.
Nibelungen Lied.

PAUL was graduated the following summer, and he wrote begging my aunt and me to be present at the commencement exercises. I was much surprised when Aunt Wendover announced her intention of going, for in all the years I had lived with her, I had hardly known her to leave the Island. I did not care to go, for I was a little timid, and I preferred to stay at home to meet them when they returned.

They came home together, Aunt Wendover leaning on Paul's arm as they came up from the wharf. He told me that Aunt Wendover had looked so handsome and stately in her black satin and rich lace, that he was proud of her. I knew very well that she was proud of him, and she had reason to be.

I could see that Paul had grown much older during the last months, and I soon knew what had made him a man all at once. He loved,

and he wore a new dignity. That first evening he told us of his engagement, and before he named the girl, I knew that it was Cecil Stuart. I did not know why I felt that sudden pang at the thought, but for a few moments I scarcely knew what he was saying, his voice seemed to come from a great distance.

Aunt Wendover seemed pleased, and I imagined that she had wished for this very thing since Cecil came to the Island. She was coming again later in the summer, so Paul said, and he was all anticipation. I nerved myself to meet her and not falter in showing her the necessary attentions.

Paul talked of her to me almost constantly, and that was hardest of all. All his conversation was sure to drift to one theme—Cecil. If we walked to the western side of the Island to see the sun set, he wished that she could be there to enjoy it. If we went rowing on a fine moonlight night, he wished Cecil could see the reflection the moon cast on the water. He thought of her constantly, and he saw everything with her eyes. "She will be like a sister to you, Agnes," he would say. "The Island will be much pleasanter for you after she comes to stay." And so he would run on, never dreaming that every word stabbed me.

He used to row over to the city nearly every

day to get her letter, for he was very particular to get them himself. I could tell when he had received one, for he would look so bright and happy. Cecil always sent loving messages to "dear Agnes," and I feared Paul was hurt because I never said more than "remember me to Cecil," or "give Cecil my kind regards." I couldn't say more, though I was sorry to disappoint Paul.

They were to be married in the autumn. Although Paul was very young, Aunt Wendover had no objections. She said that life was full of disappointments, and Paul need not defer his happiness.

But it was not to be as Paul hoped. Cecil Stuart never was worthy of Paul Raymond, and I had guessed it all along. One morning while he sat talking of her, Hawkins brought in the mail. There were several letters for Paul, and he eagerly seized a dainty white envelope and broke the seal. "From Cecil," he said, smiling. I went on with my sewing, and when I looked up ten minutes later, Paul's face was set and white, and he was gazing at the letter in a bewildered way.

All at once the truth flashed upon me, and when Paul threw the letter to me, saying, "Read that!" I knew what was coming. Cecil wrote to say that she had made a great mis-

take, that she was very sorry, but she believed it would be better for both if the engagement was cancelled, and so on, for six pages.

I was so indignant that I could not speak. I went to bring Aunt Wendover, for I felt that I dared not be alone with Paul when he looked so downcast. A few whispered words told her the whole story, and her face flushed with anger. She stepped ahead of me, and went right to Paul.

"Paul, darling, what can I do for you?" she said, and I never dreamed that her voice could be so tender.

"Nothing, Aunt Wendover, nothing," he said. "I can't think. I seem to be in a dream."

"No wonder! Give me the silly flirt's letter, Agnes."

I handed it to her, then ran to her room for her spectacles.

"Humph!" she said, pushing the glasses back from her eyes. "There must be some reason for this. Paul, you were there but two weeks ago; did you have any reason to expect this?"

"No, none."

My aunt's eyes roved up and down the pages, as if trying to extract some secret.

"Does Cecil know that you are not my nephew?" she asked presently.

"She did not till my last visit there, when I happened to mention it. She supposed that Agnes and I were cousins."

"There is a clue to the mystery," said my aunt. "Miss Cecil does not think it wise to marry you. Since you are not my nephew she thinks you are not my heir. Well, you may tell her that you are, and she may change her mind."

Paul's face wore a scornful expression, as he said, "It is too late now. I could not forget this."

"You are right!" said my aunt, with much decision. "Don't think of her again. There are better women in the world."

"But a thing like this hurts one's faith in human nature," said Paul sadly.

"Poor lad! poor lad!" she said, laying her hand on his shoulder.

He put his arm around her, and I turned away and left them together.

I felt very bitterly toward the girl who had hurt Paul so cruelly. I knew that the light-hearted boy was gone, and that he would never come back again. I wished, oh! how I wished that she had been true to him. Little did she

know how she cheated herself when she threw aside a heart like Paul's!

Poor Paul! He looked utterly wretched, and I pitied him so that I could have wept for him. The days dragged on for two or three weeks, and during that time I saw very little of Paul. He shut himself up in his little study, and I could hear him pacing the floor hour after hour. I could do nothing to help him bear his trouble, but I used to sit on the stairs just outside his door, and fancy that I was keeping him company. I felt that something must be done; it seemed so strange that he took no interest in his favorite pursuits, and I feared that he would die of grief.

One morning he came into the room where my aunt and I were sitting. He stood before her and said, "Aunt Wendover, do you remember promising me that I should travel? I want to go away now, if you have no objections."

Aunt Wendover smiled, glad to have him show interest in anything. "You may go any time you like, Paul. But are you going alone?" she asked.

He laughed a strange little laugh. "I didn't mean to, but now I shall," he said.

"I thought perhaps one of your friends would join you. If there is any one whom you

would like to have for company, I would be willing to pay his expenses."

"No, aunt, I've got to fight this trouble out alone. And I have more than this to settle. I don't know when I shall come back; for the first time in my life I dislike the Island. I cannot be contented here. I am afraid that I am disappointing you, and I am more sorry than I can say. However, I hope to do better by-and-by. If there is anything that you particularly want me to be or do, tell me; I may be able to act on your advice some day."

"O Paul, I don't know that I have any plans. I hoped you would love the Island. There is excellent society in the city, and if you would only make up your mind to come back here to live, you could do just as you please."

"I don't think I would enjoy such an idle existence, Aunt Wendover. I used to think that I would do something with my life that is worth doing, but now I have no plans. At any rate, I must have a change. Perhaps climbing the Alps will help me forget."

"I am sure it will. Change of scene will do wonders for you. I am glad for your sake that you go just now. How soon do you want to leave?"

"There is a steamer that sails in five days;

I think I must go then. I shall telegraph for my passage to-day."

Paul had few preparations to make, and he made those quietly. After all, he was ready two days before his steamer was to sail. He played a great deal during these last days, and he chose the saddest music. The last evening he went into the drawing-room and before long I heard him playing the *Sonate Pathétique*. He played it as if he felt the heartbreak in it. Aunt Wendover sat in the room, but I had forgotten her presence till I heard a half-stifled sob. The Sonate affected her as it affected me. She rose a moment later, and went into the drawing-room, shutting the door after her. The music stopped then, and I could hear the murmur of their voices. It was Paul's last evening, and though I waited till late, hoping that they could come out, they did not come. And at last I crept away to bed and sobbed myself to sleep.

We had an early breakfast next morning, for Paul had to hurry away. We all pretended to eat, and no one dared talk much for fear of a break in the voice.

We stood together on the veranda for the last moment, while Paul said good-bye.

"I'll try to write, Aunt Wendover, and you must promise not to worry about me," he said.

Then he drew her aside, and spoke in a low tone, though I heard what he said. "Be kind to Agnes, Aunt Wendover."

"I'll try to be, Paul, I will indeed," she answered. "Paul, you must not let this disappointment hurt you. Other people have come through like trials, and they have been none the worse. Remember the story I once told you, and harbor no bitterness."

"I don't, Aunt Wendover, but I am hurt, though not so deeply that the wound will not heal."

As he spoke, he stooped to tighten a strap on his valise, but I knew it was done to hide his face. Just then John came to take his luggage, and it was time to part. Paul kissed us, and hurried away. As I watched him as the boat went over the water, I knew that his youth had come to an end. For myself, I went into the house, feeling like a middle-aged woman.

That evening I sat alone till I could not endure the solitude, then I took my work and knocked timidly at the door of my aunt's boudoir.

I think Aunt Wendover was glad that I came to sit with her. She said but little to me, but she spoke kindly. I noticed that she often looked closely at me, and I felt a nervous de-

sire to look in the glass to see if my collar was straight and my hair in order. Perhaps, though, she was not thinking of me; her thoughts may have been with Paul.

At last the clock struck ten, and I dared not delay longer. I began to roll up my work preparatory to leaving the room.

"Are you going, Agnes?" said my aunt.

"Yes, Aunt Wendover. Good night."

"Good night," and I noticed with pleasure how kind her tone was. I hoped that she would heed Paul's request, and be kinder to me.

I found a note on my toilet table, and on the envelope was written, "For Agnes." I eagerly seized it, and locking the door, I sat down to read it. It ran thus:

DEAR AGNES: "Before I go I want to tell you something that I can better put on paper than say by word of mouth. I want to thank you for all you have been to me through the past years. No sister could have been more faithful than you have been, and no brother can feel a warmer affection than I have and always shall have for you. The trouble that has come to me, only makes the friends who are faithful seem more dear. I shall think of you while I am away among new scenes. It seems selfish to leave you alone, but I must go. I am in doubt about many things. Sometimes I even doubt God's goodness. I am in deep waters, Agnes, pray that they may not overwhelm me.

"I hope you will use my little den, and I shall often imagine you sitting there. Use it as much as you like, read any papers you please. You will find some new ones, and they may explain some of my doubts.

"One thing more, dear, be all to Aunt Wendover that you can. Cultivate her a little, even at the risk of being rebuffed. There is a warm heart under that cold exterior. I have found it so. I think she will turn to you when I am away. Sometimes I have feared that I stood in your light, but I did not mean to. I hope you will draw very near to each other. Try to keep her heart warm, don't let it freeze again.

"Good-by, Agnes. Don't forget to pray for poor Paul, who sometimes neglects to pray for himself."

For the first time I now knew that Paul had doubts. I had always supposed that his sky was clear of clouds. I was glad that he had told me, for I could make them the subject of special prayer. And the precious letter was carefully locked away in my treasure-box, for I possessed nothing half so dear as those words that told me that I had helped and comforted Paul.

CHAPTER XVI.

DR. BARNHAM'S STORY.

YET courage, soul! Nor hold thy strength in vain,
In hope o'ercome the steeps God set for thee.
Far past the Alpine—summits of great pain
Lieth thine Italy. *Rose Terry Cooke.*

WHAT a short time it takes to change children into men and women! Sometimes we hardly cease petting the child before the man or woman stands before us. It was something like that with Agnes and Paul. Agnes grew up first. She was a very attractive little body, though she never suspected such a thing. She always thought herself positively homely, and no one could convince her of the contrary. But she was goodness itself. If she had not been, she might have been jealous of Paul, for Miss Wendover made a great difference between the two. Paul must have every wish granted, or, rather, anticipated, but she never seemed to dream that Agnes was almost dying of stifled cravings.

I did hope that Agnes would love Arthur Grey. I thought that would solve everything,

and give her a future bright enough to compensate for the barren past. I thought at first that she did not know her own mind, and I longed to whisper to Arthur to take heart of grace. Nellie felt even worse than I did. Indeed, in her pity she might have interfered too much, if I had not stopped her. It seemed that Arthur had made a confidante of her long before, so she could not bear to give it up. I think she talked to Agnes, but she got no satisfaction from her.

Poor Agnes must have been lonelier than ever after that happened, for she stopped coming to our house. I knew that she dreaded to meet Arthur, for he had been here a great deal, on her account, I suppose. We grew lonely ourselves, for Arthur stayed away too, I suppose in order to save Agnes any embarrassment. When I remonstrated with him, he told me that he meant to absent himself a good deal because he wished Agnes to come here as usual. So I went to her, telling her that we could not do without her, and begged her to come to us again.

I saw that a change had come to the poor child's face in those few weeks. Her first trouble had come to her, and it had left its mark. It is said that sorrow makes us strong, and I think it must, else a good God would not

allow it to come to so many of us. Nevertheless, I knew that Agnes never could be quite the same after that experience, and I wished it could have had a happier ending.

But that was not all. Paul, too, had a taste of the ministry of sorrow. I never liked Cecil Stuart, and I wondered that, with all her shrewdness, Miss Wendover did not read her more correctly. She was a shallow, silly coquette, but so pretty that one almost forgave her her silliness. It seemed a sad waste of good material to see a fellow like Paul Raymond deliberately falling in love with a girl of Cecil's stamp. But I suppose it had to be, and sad as these experiences are, they are salutary. I could have foretold that she would fail Paul sometime; but I thought she would marry him. I foresaw conquest for Cecil, and a life-long discipline for Paul. But heaven was kinder to him than he realized at the time. Miss Cecil took the idea into her pretty head that as Paul was no kin of Miss Wendover, he would not be likely to have much at her death. She had an ambitious, engineering mamma, and they judged that a "bird in the hand was worth two in the bush." A rich widower wanted to marry Cecil, and he was the bird in the hand. So Paul, was rejected, but he knew enough to go away on a long tour, and Miss Wendover packed him off.

"Do you suppose he will get over it?" she asked me the first time I saw her after Paul left.

"Of course he will," I said. "He will be more of a man for this. It is not good for us to have everything we want. Paul will sometime love a woman who is worthy even of him, and he will bless the day that Cecil Stuart played him false."

I took Paul into my office and talked freely to him. I quoted the words of Robert Chambers, "Books are the blessed chloroform of the mind. I wonder how folks in trouble did without them in old time." And I reminded him how when Gœthe lost his son he plunged into the study of a new science. I knew that if Paul's old love for study once took possession of him, he would be safe. I gave him a letter of introduction to an old friend of mine in Göttingen. He is a distinguished professor now, though he was a poor student when I first knew him.

I went down to the city with Paul, and parted with him on the steamer. He looked tragic and hopeless enough, but I knew he would get over that.

After Paul was off I returned home and went over to the Island and tried to carry some comfort to the two lonely women left behind.

Both were sad enough, and Agnes, especially, looked miserable. I asked her if she was feeling ill, and she shook her head. Poor girl, what a relief it would have been to her if she could have gone away and lost her troubles in travel.

CHAPTER XVII.

AGNES' STORY.

THE God of the Christian is a God of metamorphoses. You throw grief into his hand, and he will give you back peace; you give him despair, he will send back hope; it is a sinner he has touched, a saint returns him thanks.—*Mme. Swetchine.*

PAUL'S letters came but seldom, and they were very short and unsatisfactory. He wrote merely to keep us from being anxious about him. He mentioned the places he visited in a cursory way, as if all were alike to him. Dr. Barnham had given him letters to a friend of his, in Germany, a specialist in medical science, and Paul took up his old plan of studying medicine.

Aunt Wendover heaved a sigh of relief when she heard that news. "I feel better now. Study will help him, I hope. I could not bear to think of his misery. I would have been willing to suffer for him if such a thing were possible. Do you think that he has any other trouble besides his disappointment about Cecil?"

I did not know what to say at first, but after

a moment I told her the truth, that Paul was in doubt. She put her hand up to her face, and for some time she sat motionless. I did not know what to think of her silence. I did not suppose that she would feel so sorry over Paul's doubts, and yet there was grief in every line of her figure.

After a while she took her hand from her face and said, or rather, moaned, "The curse has come upon me! Because I would not believe, God has stricken me through the being I love best. Oh, Paul must get back his faith! His life will be wrecked without it! I have lived so many years saying that I did not believe, and it was an awful life! But, Agnes, I believed all the time in my heart. I was rebellious because God would not give me what I most wanted, and as if I could punish him, I said I would have nothing to do with him. I kept my word all through those bitter years, and now he has punished me in the worst way. I never taught Paul wrong. I dared not; for his father, in his last moments, begged me to make a good man of him. I sent the child to church, and I never told him that I thought such things were foolish. And Paul, the last one in the world to fall that way! I thought that he was rooted and grounded in the faith, if any one ever was. Oh! I can't stand it, I

can't! O God! If Paul gets back his old faith, I will serve thee through the few days remaining to me."

The last sentence sounded like an ejaculatory prayer, and I listened in amazement.

"Help me, Agnes, tell me what to do," she went on. "I am as ignorant as a child, but I want to save Paul from my bitterness."

I fervently wished for some one older and wiser than I, for I did not know what to say to her. I breathed a prayer for direction, and then I said, "Aunt Wendover, make good that promise you made just now. Serve God all the rest of your life, and see if he will not bring Paul through to the light. It is not his will that any should perish, and surely a soul like Paul's must be precious in his sight."

"I have been thinking about these things for some time. Paul himself first made me see what a hard woman I am, and now he is in darkness and doubt. Yes, yes, I must have a change, I cannot live like this any longer. My burden is greater than I can bear. But how late my repentance, how late my repentance! Agnes, you must help me. I have never treated you very well, but you must forgive me and help me through this. If I live, I'll be a better aunt to you in the future."

"O Aunt Wendover!" I cried, taking her

hand, "we may be happy yet. I will do all I can to help you, and you must do much for yourself. We both will pray, and you know that God has promised to hear."

"Yes, but I am a hard-hearted old Pharisee. You are a good girl, Agnes, and I have known it a long time. I am not blind, though I may seem so. Your quiet, useful life has been a constant reproach to me, and I might have learned much from you if I had not been so proud. Agnes, will you try to love me a little!"

She spoke the words very wistfully, and I was very glad to hear them. I put up my face to kiss her, for I was too happy for speech. She kissed me for the first time in her life, and then we wept together. I knew that the old hardness was gone; we loved each other at last.

"I wish Paul could know all this," I said, for I knew how happy the news would make him.

"I shall tell him all, you may be sure, Agnes, I shall tell him how mistaken I have been, and how I yearn to make amends in the future. I am in earnest, and I never was one to do things by halves. With God's help, there will be a change in my life. Now I am going to write to Paul."

After she left, I went to my room to think over the events of the morning, for the sudden

change had dazed me. How often my imagination had pictured such a scene; how often I had prayed for the very thing that had just happened, and now that it had happened, I was surprised. Where can our faith be when we are *surprised* at the answer to our prayers? Do we think that because our prayers are not answered as soon as offered, that the Lord's arm is shortened that he cannot save?

I, too, began a letter to Paul that day, but before I sent it, I received one from him. It told me more of his trouble of mind than I had known before, and I began to understand it better. I had thought it very strange that one so deeply religious as Paul should be called to pass through a trial of that sort. But I began to see that he was passing through that season through which many who truly believe have passed some time. Those who have conquered doubts best know in *whom* they believe, and why they believe. God would surely appear again as the "Chief among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely." Poor Paul! I could not go with him through his trial, but I could pray that it might be short.

After that day, Aunt Wendover clung closely to me. One day she said to me, "Agnes, can you lend me a Bible?" I want to read to myself some of the chapters I used to hear you and

Paul read together. I want to study it as one studies a guide book."

I ran to get her a Bible. She carried it to her room and shut the door.

The next day was Sunday, and as I dressed for church, I resolved to ask Aunt Wendover to go with me, though I had little hope that she would consent. I knew that I if I were in her place I would shrink from making my appearance in church, for it would cause so much comment.

But, to my surprise, I found Aunt Wendover dressed with even more than her usual care, and her first words were, "Agnes will you take me to church to-day?"

How glad I was, but I did not say anything about my surprise. John looked volumes when he saw her coming down to the wharf with me, and in his amazement he forgot to bring the cushions from the boat-house. My aunt reproved him sharply, and after that he had his senses about him.

"I presume that people will stare to-day," said Aunt Wendover, as we walked to the church. "One thing is certain, they cannot say more than is true. I hope I shall not shock Arthur Grey so that he cannot preach."

I saw surprise written on more than one face as we walked up the broad aisle. Miss Wen-

dover had been well known in the city during her gay young days, and no one who had ever seen that handsome, set face, and tall, straight figure, could easily forget it.

"As it happened, I knew what Mr. Grey's subject was to be, for Mrs. Barnham had mentioned it, and I was sorry that it was not more adapted to Aunt Wendover's needs. But to my surprise, when he announced his text it was this: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The sermon that followed was a plain setting forth of the relation between Christ and the sinner. It was so simple that a child might understand it, and so logical that a philosopher could pick no flaws in it. I guessed then, and I afterward learned that I was right; Mr. Grey had changed his mind, for the sight of Aunt Wendover sitting there, had given him a new text, and he had spoken right from his heart.

Once or twice I stole a look at my aunt. To all appearances, she sat unmoved, but knowing her expressions so well I saw that she felt deeply; for her bosom heaved, and her breath came hard and fast.

Dr. Barnham and his wife came up to speak

to us at the close of the service, and so did Mr. Grey.

"It seems good to see you here, Alicia," said the good doctor, shaking hands warmly. Mrs. Barnham, too, gave her hand, and her sweet face was aglow with sympathy, though she said nothing in words. "Will you come with Agnes and spend the rest of the day with us?" she asked, and the doctor warmly seconded her invitation.

But Aunt Wendover kindly refused, saying that she might go some other day. I whispered a word to Mrs. Barnham and so excused myself. We walked through the streets without speaking, but just as we reached the boat, Aunt Wendover seemed to notice my presence, and she said, "Why, Agnes! I thought you were going to the doctor's. Go back yet, it is not too late."

"I prefer to go home with you, Aunt," I said, and she did not press the matter further. I think she wanted me near her, even though she seldom spoke to me.

That evening we did not go to church. We sat in the twilight, in silence. Once my aunt startled me by saying, "Agnes, I would be willing to be lost myself if, I could save him!"

"To save whom, Aunt Wendover?" I asked.

"Paul, of course. I would be willing to be

lost if that would save him. I have thought about it all day."

"Aunt Wendover, there is no need of such a thing, even if it could be possible!" I cried, horrified. "Let me tell you again that God wills not that *any* should perish. Paul will see the light; of that I am certain. God is trying him for some reason. He knows where he is leading him. Perhaps our dear Paul has some special work to do, and this may be God's way of fitting him for it. Surely one who has conquered doubt can best help others who are in like troubles. Paul has a mission in the world. Do you remember how he used to lie awake at night and cry over the misery in the world? Paul has the spirit of Christ, and how can he be lost? Sometimes I think that his trouble was sent to lead you to Christ. You say that nothing could hurt you as this has hurt you. God sent his sharpest arrow through your soul when he touched Paul."

"Why, Agnes, how did you learn so much wisdom? I never dreamed that you thought so deeply," said my aunt, regarding me with surprise. "I think there is much reason in what you say, but how can you see so clearly? You are wise in things that are of the most vital importance, and I am as ignorant as a child. But I am seeking to learn," she added.

"And Christ is willing and waiting to teach," I said.

If I said anything that helped her it was God speaking through me in answer to my prayers. For in those days I prayed almost constantly for guidance. I never in my life felt more humble, and if I had ever felt any spiritual pride, it had left me.

As the days went on, I could see that Aunt Wendover was changing gradually. I think she was too distrustful of herself, or she would have known how rapid was her progress in the new life. She did not try to serve God and Mammon. Long before the change came, I used to think, "What a christian Aunt Wendover would make!" for as she said, she was not one to do anything half-way.

I waited anxiously for Paul's next letter. I hoped he would have some good news to tell, for, somehow I thought that Aunt Wendover's change must make a difference in his feelings. But his letter was not what I had hoped for. Of course he said that he was very glad and thankful to hear such good news of Aunt Wendover. But in my letter he wrote that he saw no light yet, though he was sure that the day must dawn some time. I felt sure of it too, though tears blinded my eyes as I read the page.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AGNES' STORY.

Sorrow comes to all;
Our life is checked with sorrows manifold;
But woman has this more—she cannot call
Her sorrow by its name.—*Jean Ingelow.*

THE first winter after Paul left, seemed interminable. The weather was unusually cold, and we were almost entirely cut off from communication with the mainland. On some days when the wind roared around the house, and the storm beat against the windows, I felt that I should go mad with the loneliness of it. There was one bright spot, however, in my dark existence—the perfect confidence between Aunt Wendover and myself. We felt kindly toward each other, and we sat and worked together, though we never talked much.

Still, when she did feel like having any conversation, I learned a great deal that I wished to know about the history of the past. She talked to me of my father, and she told me of all the long ago dead and gone Wendovers. They were not relatives to be proud of, at least, many of them were not, and I was glad that I had not their proud, imperious na-

ture. I once said to my aunt that I must be like my poor Italian mother, for I was no Wendover.

She thought a moment, then she said, "Yes, perhaps you are right. And it may be well for you that you are. Of course, I know nothing about her, but your father loved her dearly, so he said. It must have been a strong attachment to cause him to forget his position and marry a girl poor enough to sit to him for a model."

"That did not hurt her," I said gently, for I felt tender toward the memory of the mother I had hardly known.

"Of course not. What I have told you is only rumor. I only know that my brother married in Italy, and that he left a daughter. I used to feel that you were a great burden, Agnes. You can't imagine how I hated to have the deadly stillness of the house broken by the presence of a child. I resolved when you first came that I would make you so quiet that you would not disturb me. I kept my resolve so well that I nearly crushed the childhood out of you, and broke your spirit. It was well for me, and well for you that Paul came. I did not dare put him through the same discipline that I had put you; he would have died under it. I used to smile in spite of

myself to see how he was changing me. God must have sent him to keep my hard old heart alive, for it was fast turning into stone."

A little later Aunt Wendover sighed, and said, "I wish he could be with us to-night! I can almost fancy that I hear him playing; he always played so much at twilight. Agnes, it is too dark to see to sew. Can't you play for me? Music will do us good."

I put my work away at once, and opened the piano. It was a new thing for my aunt to ask me to play. I was willing to please her, but I never sat down to the piano without feeling nervous. I know she tried to be patient with my bungling, but sometimes she would call out, "Agnes, don't drag that so!" or, "Agnes, do put a little more feeling into that passage. Remember how Paul would play it."

I didn't mind her criticisms so much, for I knew I tried her with my stupidness. When she asked me to play some sweet, old-fashioned melodies, I succeeded better with them. As soon as I saw that she had any interest in my playing, I resolved to improve, and to that end, I practiced regularly every day. She saw my desire to please her, and she said, "You must have a teacher, Agnes. Just as soon as spring comes, I shall see about it. Paul will be delighted if you take up music in earnest."

But the spring was a long way ahead, when January snows were piled around the house. And, I used to mope a great deal. If Aunt Wendover had been the aunt of ten years before, I don't know how I could have lived through it all. I say all, for I worried over Paul's worries, and, besides, I had a trouble that I would scarcely confess to myself, much less speak of. Nevertheless, I feared that Aunt Wendover's sharp eyes read my secret. She seemed to look right through me.

One evening I sat thinking, thinking, till the needle slipped from my listless fingers. In spite of myself, my voice forced itself through my throat, and I sobbed. I was sorry in an instant, and I hoped that Aunt Wendover had not heard it. I picked up my sewing, and began to stitch steadily. When I dared, I looked up, and I saw that she was looking intently at me.

"Agnes, Mr. Grey seems likely to live a bachelor life," she said. "I believe he has never had a thought for any one but you. Have you never been sorry for the answer you once gave him?"

I was relieved that she had nothing worse to say, for lately, I had begun to dread her eyes. Thus reassured, I held up my head, and went on with my sewing.

"Agnes, look up!" and I had to obey her. "Agnes," she said kindly, "I know why you cannot love Arthur Grey. It is because you love Paul. Is it not so?"

I hid my face on the table. In an instant Aunt Wendover came to me and laid her hand on my shoulder, and she said kindly, "Agnes, child, I know, I know. You can't think how sorry I am for you. I have guessed this for some time, and for a few weeks I have been sure."

"O Aunt Wendover!" I faltered, "do you think any one else has suspected it?"

"No, I think not. You have kept your secret well, Agnes. Oh! it is the Wendover curse to be disappointed in love. I am sorry you must feel it, too. I know just what you are going through, and I can sympathize with you. I loved Paul's father, and you love Paul. This makes another tie between us. We must love each other all the more now, Agnes."

She shed tears of sympathy, and I had no longer any need to keep mine back. I felt relieved that she knew my secret, for it had been hard to bear. I had imagined that she would be angry if she knew the truth, for I thought she held Paul much above me. So I was surprised to hear her say, as she stroked my hair, "Agnes, I wish it could be! I believe it would

make me very happy. There is no reason why it should not be, except that people who are brought up together seldom love in that way. I suppose there is more charm in a new face. Who knows but all will come around right yet? I'm sure I hope so."

"O Aunt Wendover! You will never breathe a word to—him?"

"You need not have any fears that I will betray your secret. It is safe with me. I will try to help you bear it, for I know what it is. Your trial can never be as bitter as mine, for you cannot cherish enmity as I did. Oh how wrong I was, how wrong I was! I am glad I am a different woman at last; but I look with regret on all those wasted years."

"Aunt Wendover, don't you think you ought to join the church?" I asked.

"I don't know, Agnes. I hardly feel satisfied yet, and still, I don't want to put it off too long. I want to belong with God's people before I die, and I cannot tell how short my time may be."

"O Aunt Wendover!" I cried in dismay; "What makes you say that?"

"I have known for a long time that I have heart disease. Any sudden excitement may make it worse. Besides, I feel that I am fail-

ing quite fast. Well, I can't expect to be young any more."

"Won't you be careful, Aunt Wendover?" I begged. "I can't bear the thought of losing you."

She smiled when I said that, and replied, "I am glad you care so much for me, Agnes. I know you mean what you say, for you can't feign anything. I would like to live for your sake, if for nothing else. You are peculiarly situated, you have no relatives, and I don't know to whom you can turn after I am gone. I used to think that I should leave the bulk of the property to Paul, and only a legacy to you; but I shall not do you such an injustice. You and Paul shall share alike. There will be fortunes for both, for I have been very successful in my business affairs. I suppose you ought to have the house left to you, but I hate to think of your living a lonely life like mine—another Miss Wendover on Wendover Island."

The winter wore away slowly, and at last the tardy spring came. We welcomed it joyfully, for we had been in durance long.

Paul had written occasionally through the winter, and we knew that he was studying hard. He said little about himself, and we had to be content with the fragmentary letters we received.

CHAPTER XIX.

AGNES' STORY.

DEATH is not always a matter for grief. If you have ever beheld a rich sunset from the summit of a lofty mountain, you will remember how the world was transfigured before you in the glory of resplendent light, and how, long after the light had faded from the cloud-drapery, and long after the hills had begun to lose themselves in the abyss of darkness, there lingered a glory in the western horizon—a joyous memory of the splendid pomp of the evening.—*Edward Eggleston.*

WHEN the weather was fine again, Aunt Wendover often sent me over to Dr. Barnham's. I had scarcely been there during the winter, and I was glad to take up my habit of visiting them. We had attended church very seldom while the cold weather lasted, so I had seen Mr. Grey but a few times. The first time I met him at the doctor's I was shocked at the change in him. He was very thin, and he coughed almost constantly. I asked Mrs. Barnham if he was ill, and she told me that he had contracted a very severe cold in the winter, and that he had never recovered from its effects. And she added sadly that she feared he never

would. And then she told me how it all came through his care for others. A lad, one of his night-school boys, had fallen into the river, and as he did not know how to swim, he was in danger of drowning. Arthur Grey stood near by, and he plunged in after him, and succeeded in bringing him safely to land. He spent some time in seeing that the boy was sent home, and he never thought of his own wet clothes, till Dr. Barnham happened along, and hurried him home. But it was too late to avoid a severe chill, and it left Mr. Grey with a cough and a weak chest. He had always had a tendency toward consumption, and the doctor feared that his disease had become settled. Mr. Grey would not own that he was ill, nor would he drop any of his work. The old pastor had grown so feeble that nearly all the parish work fell to Mr. Grey. I knew that Dr. Barnham had little hopes of him unless he rested altogether, and I knew also, that a nature like Arthur Grey's would work till the last.

"If he does not grow better this summer, I'll send him to Egypt or to Italy before next winter," growled the doctor, looking after his cousin. "I could cry over him if it would do any good. Such a useful life as his is, and to lose it in such a way! I can't see the reason

for some things," and the doctor rumpled his hair and looked the picture of despair.

When I reached home I ran to tell Aunt Wendover the sad news before I removed my wraps.

"Dear me, Agnes," she said, "I hope it is not so bad as that! He may get better, people often recover if they are careful. And the doctor will send him to a warmer climate before another winter."

"I am afraid that he will take a longer journey before that time," I said, drawing off my gloves. "Mrs. Barnham must think so too; for she cried when she spoke of him. She and the doctor love him dearly."

"And well they may, for he has a beautiful soul. He is as fine as a woman in his feelings. Paul is much like him, and I am glad he could be so much with Mr. Grey while he was growing up."

A little later my aunt said, "I am sorry that we were obliged to miss church so much last winter, for Mr. Grey may not fill the pulpit much longer. Let us hear him every time we possibly can. His preaching always helps me, and I shall miss him if the worst happens. But don't look so down-hearted, Agnes, let us hope for the best.

"He does look badly," she said on the Sab-

bath, as we were coming from church. "I would not have believed that such a change could be worked in so short a time. I don't think that he is long for this world. And he preaches as if he looked beyond the vail and saw with more than mortal vision."

I couldn't answer her.

After we reached home she said, "Agnes, I think I should like to join the church while Mr. Grey is there. My own time may be near. Until to-day I have not been quite satisfied."

Accordingly, a few weeks later Aunt Wendover joined the church, Mr. Grey reading the service. And I thought that his voice trembled as if he had more than an ordinary interest in her. He must have learned a great deal of her history, and who knows how much he had labored for her salvation.

It seemed strange and sweet to partake of the Lord's Supper side by side with Aunt Wendover, and my thoughts kept straying back to the time when Paul and I had joined the church. How little we thought then that Aunt Wendover would ever stand before the altar, and yet even that strange thing had come to pass.

It was the saddest day I ever spent, glad as I was over Aunt Wendover. Paul's trouble weighed upon me as if it had been my own,

and he had never seemed so far away. Aunt Wendover was rapidly failing, and Mr. Grey was surely and swiftly going into another world. "What have I left?" I asked myself. And a still, small voice seemed to whisper, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

But in the evening the crushing sense of sadness came again. It rained, and we did not attempt to go to church. I lay on the lounge with my face buried in the pillows, and gave up to my sad thoughts.

"Agnes, are you crying?" Aunt Wendover asked at length.

"No," I answered.

"I can't bear to see you so unhappy. What is it, my dear? Is there anything new?"

There was no answer, and she went on.

"Are you thinking of Mr. Grey? Agnes, are you sure that you did not make a mistake? Sometimes we don't see clearly till some one dear to us stands close to death. Perhaps you care for him more than you knew."

"More than I knew, perhaps, but only in the old way. He was my friend when I was a child, and both Paul and I loved him!"

"I remember. He was kind to you when I cared nothing for you. Poor Paul! how sorry

he will be to hear this news. Have you written it, Agnes?"

"No, I could not bear to write it. I kept putting it off. I think he would come home if he thought the end was very near."

"I think he would, poor lad! How I long to see him!"

I didn't say that I wanted to see him, though perhaps my wish laid even deeper than Aunt Wendover's.

That summer passed somehow. I cannot remember what happened, or what I did. We heard from Paul very seldom, and he wrote nothing but commonplaces. This silence about himself hurt both Aunt Wendover and me, but we did not let him know it. He was traveling in Norway with some student friends; he was quite well, he missed us, and that is about all we could learn from his letters.

It was very dull for us, for the Barnhams took Mr. Grey off to the sea-shore, and I missed my visits there. The news from Mr. Grey was not encouraging. The doctor wrote that he seemed to improve a little at first, but he sank again after a few days, and the doctor was forced to see that the disease was gaining daily despite all his efforts. He brought the sick man back just on the edge of the autumn, for no place seemed so much like home to him.

His parents were dead, and while his brothers and sisters had plenty of affectionate solicitude on his account, they could not do for him what the doctor and his wife could. He went to their house, and all that affection could suggest, they did for him.

Aunt Wendover and I went to see him soon after his return. We found him lying on the lounge in Mrs. Barnham's pretty parlor, with his Greek Testament in his hand. He tried to rise as we entered, but Aunt Wendover motioned him to lie still.

"You see, Miss Wendover, they are trying to make me believe that I am a sick man," he said, smiling as he gave her his hand.

He held it out to me a moment after. It was a pale, thin hand, scarcely larger than my own.

The doctor and his wife came in as soon as we were seated, and they talked a great deal about their summer trip. But gay as their words were, I caught an undertone of sadness. The pale man on the sofa talked but little, but he seemed interested in all we said.

Mrs. Barnham urged us to stay to tea, and she had the tea things brought into the parlor, for she would not allow Mr. Grey to walk to the dining-room. The pretty tea-table, the faces that bore marks of pain despite the smiles they tried to wear, and best of all, I re-

member the face in the background that wore only weakness, no sorrow.

After his return the disease did its work quickly. Dr. Barnham wanted to take him to a warmer climate for the winter, but he begged for a respite; for the weather was still fine, and winter seemed long in the distance. So the days passed, until he was too weak to be moved. I think he was glad that it was so, for he wished to finish his life among his people.

Aunt Wendover and I went often to see him, carrying the choicest gifts that we could find to tempt his appetite. Mrs. Barnham said he watched for our coming, and he always seemed pleased when we entered the room. I had little to say to him in those days; perhaps it was because I felt so much. I dreaded to be alone with him, and he must have known it, for one day when the others chanced to be out, he called me to his side.

"Agnes, come here, please," he said, and I went and sat by his lounge.

I couldn't think of anything to say, and I let my eyes drop on my lap. When I looked up, I saw that he was looking at me very kindly and tenderly.

"Agnes, tell me, child, that you are not grieving over a certain thing that I once wished. Sometimes I fear that you are."

"O Mr. Grey! I am, I can't help it!" I cried. "I wish now that I had given you a different answer if it would have made your last days happier."

"Dear little friend," and he reached out his hand and clasped mine, "it would not have made me happy unless it had made you happy too. You were quite right to answer as you did. Now I want you to promise me that you will not grieve after—you know what I mean. Don't look so sorry, Agnes. You know that I am gaining a great deal by exchanging this world for the other. At first I did cry, my work! my work! But I soon saw that it is God's work, and that he can raise up laborers in my stead. Now I have no will of my own. I am very comfortable here, for Nellie and Jack are very kind to me; but whenever the call comes I am ready. It is only stepping out of Jack's house into my Father's house, to be forever with the Lord.

"I should like to see Paul once more, but I cannot wish him here. You must tell him about it, Agnes, and give him my warmest love. I have thought a great deal about his doubts, and I want you to tell him this one word from me. 'God is love.' And all that comes to us he sends in love. The whole plan of salvation is based on love, for 'God so loved the world,

that he gave his only begotten Son,' and it is love that will receive us in heaven at the end."

The western rays of the sun came through the window and formed a halo around his head. Already he looked like a being belonging to another world, and I felt almost afraid of the radiance that shone in his face.

The others soon came in, and then the conversation became general.

"Come often, Agnes," said Mr. Grey, as I bade him good-by, and I promised that I would, little dreaming that the end was so very, very near.

That night I sat up till long after my usual hour for retiring, busied with a letter to Paul. I told him how fast Mr. Grey was failing, and I gave him his message. I did not seal my letter, for I thought I might have later news of him in the morning.

And I had. Before I went down-stairs I looked out of the window and saw Dr. Barnham coming toward the house. I ran down to meet him, but Aunt Wendover was at the door before me.

"It is over," the doctor said. "He went home—I can't call such a transition dying—last night. He seemed to rally after you left, and when I proposed helping him to his room, he said he wanted to wait and see the moon

rise. So I drew back the curtain so that he could see the sky. None of us talked for a while, and Nellie went to the piano and played that favorite twilight hymn, 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.' He hummed a bar or two very softly, then as I went nearer to look out of the window, he said, 'Jack, this moon makes me think of one of Wordsworth's sonnets,' and he repeated a few lines. You know it, Agnes, I think. It begins like this:

"'With how sad steps, O Moon thou climb'st the sky,'

"After that he seemed to lie quietly listening to Nellie's playing. All at once he called, 'It has come, Jack! Yes, ready!' as if answering to a call. He did not speak again, and in a few moments he was gone."

As the doctor finished, he could not command his voice, and he wiped the tears from his cheeks. Aunt Wendover, too, was weeping, but I could not cry just then. It seemed wrong to grudge him his triumphant entrance.

I added a few words to Paul's letter and sent it. For two months after we heard nothing from him. He sent us newspapers regularly, and we thought he meant us to know that he was well. If he had known what that long silence meant to us, I think he would have

written, no matter what his trouble was. We women have the passive side of life, the waiting and the anxiety. If the men who are in the front of the battle only knew how hard it is to wait and wait for news!

But I could not blame Paul, for I did not know what he was passing through. Sorrow makes our dear ones sacred, and we do not dare intrude into the inner sanctuary of their hearts.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL'S STORY.

I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! What time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send His hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In His good time.
Robert Browning.

I SPENT a miserable time after I left the Island. Even at this day when I think of that time I could weep in self-pity. I never knew how it all happened; but all at once my faith gave way, and I was left with nothing to cling to. I don't see how that little episode of Cecil could plunge me into such darkness, but a man's hand held before his eyes will obscure the sun. And so perhaps, I let that disappointment cloud my eyes and hide my Father in heaven from me.

Fool that I was! How petty and childish it all seems to me now. But I must not anticipate. Let me faithfully record the struggle with myself and the demon of doubt. For the

doubt lasted long after the wound made by Cecil had healed. I knew before long that my pride only was hurt; my heart was not touched. I began to feel better sooner than I meant to. I had not lost my self-consciousness, and I had resolved that I would be a long time getting cured. But it is strange how much India rubber there is in our hearts; they bound back so soon! Perhaps though, mine was easily healed because I was not really in love with Cecil. There have been hearts that have broken with misery.

I was quite provoked at myself after a little, because I could not be more miserable. I was amazed to find that I ate and slept like any other man. And the poetry that I wrote to the "false one" was not a success. Somehow I could not get the "lilt." The pathetic "Farewell" in C minor that I dedicated to her, remains unfinished to this day. Not long ago I found it among some old papers, and I laughed over it with—but never mind whom.

Dr. Barnham's parting words kept coming back to me, and before long I began to see the truth in them. At the time, I pitied him for his lack of sentiment. I charitably made allowances for him, for was he not middle-aged and stout? He told me to study and forget everything else, and months afterward I acted upon his advice.

At first I studied in a hap-hazard way, reading German authors, and studying music. I could not let music alone, for the very atmosphere was full of it. Then I received a letter from the doctor with more good advice. I was able to see the wisdom of it by that time, and I began to look over some medical books, carelessly at first; but before long I saw what a grand science it was, and I devoted myself to hard study with my good German friend, who was interested in me for Dr. Barnham's sake.

But that was one side of my existence only. There were weary hours when I had to face the old unbelief, and such times were not infrequent. Then I would go out and walk the streets, hoping to divert myself from my thoughts. But all to no purpose; there is no solitude like that one finds in a crowd. So it went on for more than a year.

I went on a long tramp through Norway that summer with some fellow-students. I have nothing to record of those weeks, for they were the most miserable of my life. I moved when the others moved, but I might as well have been a stone for all I saw or enjoyed.

I was back at Göttingen when I received Agnes' letter telling of Arthur Grey's death. She had written me that his health was poor, but I could not believe that he would die. So

I was shocked when I opened her letter. Like a flash of lightning the thought struck me, "Why is he taken and why am I left? His life was useful and so full of promise, and mine"— I could not finish the sentence. I took up the letter and read on to the end. When I came to his message, "God is love," I stopped and read it again. I could not forget the words, and I threw myself on my knees, and cried, "God, if thou art love, manifest thyself to me." No answer came, and at last I threw myself on my bed, and lay tossing there, thinking till it seemed that my head was on fire. Day after day the struggle went on, and I found no rest. It seemed so strange that I, who had always been so confident in my faith, should be tossed on this sea of doubt, while Aunt Wendover knew the "peace that passeth all understanding." "The last shall be first, and the first shall be last," rang in my ears day and night.

I was taken ill soon after that. I had felt wretchedly for a long time, and I could not depend on my head. One day when I felt that I had to succumb to some disease, I addressed a number of wrappers, and told a friend who had rooms adjoining mine to send a newspaper home every week, and on no account to write about my condition. He promised, and I remember nothing that happened after that.

Sometimes I seemed to see strange faces standing over me, and strange voices seemed to talk near me, but I could not tell whether I dreamed or not. One day I awoke, weak as an infant, but perfectly clear in my mind. Somewhere in the labyrinths where my soul had travelled, I had found my lost peace. I lay there feeling a sweet sense of God's nearness, and then I said that he was love.

As soon as I was strong enough to hold a pen, I wrote to the Island and told Aunt Wendover and Agnes that my trouble was over. Why it was sent me I could not tell, though there must have been some reason. God chastens us for our good, that much we may know.

From the time I rose from my sick-bed I felt that God had a work for me to do, and in his strength I resolved to do it manfully. I was pleased to see that my day dreams—dear children of my fancy—came trooping back to me. My plans for helping the world that so much needs help were always with me. I burned my papers, and those that I wrote afterward were very different in tone.

I did not want to go back to the Island at once, so I decided to stay on a while and finish my medical course. Agnes and I had talked of it years before, and I thought Aunt Wen-

dover would be as pleased as we were. I never felt any call to the ministry, and I knew that Christian physicians were needed. How easily one might minister to a diseased soul after helping bodily suffering. I meant to go home after a while and do as Aunt Wendover wished me to, make the Island my home. I would help Dr. Barnham in his work among the poor in the neighboring city, and thus realize one of the plans of my boyhood.

Meantime, I diligently applied myself to my work, and I was happy. I had forgotten the episode of Cecil, or I remembered it only to pity myself for my folly. How much we should thank God that some of our prayers are not answered! Already I knew that my feeling for her was only a boyish fancy; that if she had married me she would not have satisfied my life. When a new thought took possession of me, I hardly dared give it a welcome, so fearful was I that I might mistake again. And when, after the lapse of months, I was certain that this love would last through life and death, even then I was silent out of shame. Blind! blind! I called myself. How true it is that nothing that we really need is taken from us. Then I was able to see that God in his great wisdom took away a hurtful gift to give me something infinitely better.

During vacations I used to travel on the continent, for Aunt Wendover wished me to see everything worth seeing, and I found much pleasure in my wanderings from place to place. I wrote home, and my letters were answered promptly. Nothing seemed to happen at the Island; life went on in the same quiet fashion. I often fancied Agnes and Aunt Wendover sitting together, perhaps talking of me. I was sure they were always together, for they were reconciled at last. I knew that Aunt Wendover was a changed woman, for even her letters showed it. She had always written affectionately to me, but now she wrote much about Agnes, and I could see that she thought a great deal of her. I was glad that Agnes had her reward at last.

CHAPTER XXI.

AGNES' STORY.

NOT by appointment do we meet Delight and Joy:
They heed not our expectancy;
But, round some corner in the streets of life,
They, on a sudden, clasp us with a smile.

Gerald Massey.

PAUL was yet in Germany when I began to notice that Aunt Wendover was failing. There had been a general breaking down for some time, so Dr. Barnham said. I saw with pain that her voice was weak and her step strangely feeble for one of her quick, decided gait. At last she grew so weak that she kept her room, only coming down to one meal some days when she felt unusually strong. I was with her all the time. I shared her room, and helped her with her toilet, performing all of Miller's accustomed duties.

Paul had been gone for two years and a half, and all that time we had lived without him, neither of us willing to call him back. My own life had been dull, but not exactly unhappy. I used to feel badly because I accomplished so little. I made a few clothes for

poor people, overlooked the housekeeping, for Nurse Hillyer was too feeble to work, kept the accounts, and nursed Aunt Wendover. It all was so trifling, that I did not dare think of the great world outside where so much was waiting to be done.

Of course I had no desire to leave Aunt Wendover, for I knew she was my first duty. Besides, it was a pleasure to nurse her and help her. But I foresaw a time not far distant when she would not need my care *because she would not be there.* What then? I sometimes asked myself, and I confess that the future looked dark to me. I was in my twenty-sixth year, and already I felt old. I seemed to have reached the meridian of life, and to be on the downward slope. To-day, at thirty-six, I feel much younger, and I dare say I look younger than I did then, for lately the years have touched me lightly.

Aunt Wendover sometimes expressed her sorrow because my life was going so, and perhaps she grieved over it more than I did. I knew that I pleased her, and the knowledge gave me great satisfaction. I had no trouble now since Paul had found peace and comfort, unless it was my dread of losing Aunt Wendover, and that fear grew on me daily.

One morning as I sat in her room, busied

with the week's accounts, she said, "Agnes, I want Paul, I wish you would write to him and ask him to come home. I don't know how soon the end may come, and I must see him again. Write carefully; don't alarm him unnecessarily, for I may be mistaken; my disease is so deceiving. But I think that I am failing very fast, and I made the doctor say that he thinks so too."

She did look unusually poorly that morning, and I felt my heart sink. I wrote the letter at once, and carried it to her.

"Yes, that is right," she said. "Now hurry John off to post it."

"I have no doubt but Paul will come at once," she said, when I re-entered the room. "He can't get here before the first of February, though," and she checked the days off on her fingers. "Poor fellow, I hate to send for him. I suppose he is enjoying himself, and it will seem dull to come home to a whimsical old woman."

"Now, Aunt Wendover, you are not whimsical. And I know Paul would never get over it, if we did not send for him till it was too late."

"You are right. He will come at once, for he loves me I think."

I stirred the fire, then I took up some sew-

ing and sat down by the window. I felt that my aunt was studying my face, and I looked up to see if she wanted anything.

She smiled and asked, "Does my close scrutiny annoy you, Agnes? I like to look at you, my dear."

I know that I blushed with pleasure, for it seemed pleasant to know that Aunt Wendover liked me so well. I did not answer her, though her words made me very happy.

"You are a good girl, Agnes," she went on, still looking at me. "Something very good ought to happen to you, for you deserve happiness. I may not live to see it, but I am sure that God will reward you for your goodness to me."

There was a long silence after that, while the fire crackled and glowed on the hearth.

It seemed only a few days later that the door of the sitting-room burst open, and Paul walked in. My aunt gave a glad little cry, and he caught her in his arms. He kissed her on both thin cheeks, then he said reproachfully, "Aunt Wendover, why didn't you tell me before? Why didn't Agnes tell me? I take it hard of you both. But where is Agnes?"

I was wondering if he would miss me, and I came out from my shelter behind the window curtain. He shook hands heartily, but for the

first time in his life he omitted to kiss me; I suppose he thought it time to drop such a childish custom.

He looked handsomer than ever, and he had improved in many ways. I felt darker and more insignificant than ever beside him. Aunt Wendover was so proud of him, that she could not take her eyes from him, and no wonder. The shadow that had hung over us seemed lifted, and the house was a bright place now that Paul had come home.

We had tea together in my aunt's sitting-room, and Paul seemed to fill up the little room. I smiled to see how little regard Aunt Wendover had for her *bric-à-brac*, for Paul demolished a china shepherdess and a Limoges jar in trying to settle himself in a chair.

"Beg pardon, Aunt Wendover," he said, stooping to pick up the fragments. "I am afraid I am too big to be an ornament to a lady's bower. By the way, I wonder if I should know my old den up-stairs. Have you used it any, Agnes?"

"I used to, but I have hardly been in it of late," I said.

"Agnes has been too busy waiting on me to find any time for study," said Aunt Wendover, touching my hand as I gave her her cup of tea.

"You don't know what a good nurse she is, Paul."

"I can guess. I knew you had excellent care, but I felt it selfish to stay away so long. And if I had known how poorly you were, nothing would have kept me."

"We didn't wish to spoil your pleasure," said Aunt Wendover. "It is all right now that you are here, and you must not blame yourself."

After Barbara had carried away the tea-things, my aunt said, "Paul, I want to have a talk with you if you are not too tired."

I rose to leave the room, but she said, "No, no, Agnes, you must stay. You can't think how Agnes and I love each other, Paul, she has been such a comfort to me!"

Paul smiled in a pleased way, as he said, "I knew everything would come around some time."

"I want to talk about the property," Aunt Wendover went on, "I made my will once, leaving everything to you except an annuity to Agnes. But I have made up my mind to divide the property equally. It is no more than simple justice to Agnes."

Paul made an approving gesture, and said, "I always thought Agnes had the best right to it all. I never felt satisfied about it."

"But I don't know how to divide the property. I have a large amount of money invested in stocks and bonds. I thought of giving that to you and leaving Agnes the Island. I hate, though, to think of her coming to old age in this lonely house."

"She need never be alone, Aunt Wendover," said Paul. "I shall always be her true friend and brother, if—"

Aunt Wendover's face fell. I think she hoped for some other answer. I feared lest she would say something, and I made an errand from the room, murmuring something about giving orders for breakfast.

But Paul put out his hand to stay me, "Wait, Agnes," he said, then turning to Aunt Wendover, he went on, "I want to tell you now lest you should not know it, that Agnes' happiness will always be my first care. I want to confess to you both, that I made a great mistake three years ago. I never loved Cecil Stuart. But I do love now, and I know that I am not mistaken this time."

Just then I saw that the fire needed attention, and I took up the poker, and thrust it in the grate. All the while Paul was talking, but I scarcely understood him.

"I kept quiet out of shame," he was saying,

"for fear you would think that I changed my mind too easily."

"Who is the girl, Paul?" Aunt Wendover demanded, while I braced myself against the grate with the poker, and bent my head as if I expected a blow.

"It is Agnes," said Paul simply.

"Our Agnes?" asked my aunt.

"Yes, our Agnes."

They had been talking as if they were alone in the room, but now Paul turned to me and said, "Agnes you have been the blessing of my life. Will you walk with me as long as we both live?"

Joy sometimes stuns us, as much as sorrow. I could not find my voice. But Aunt Wendover answered for me.

"It is well, Paul. Agnes loves you."

"Thank God!" said Paul. He laid his hand on mine, then stooped and kissed me as naturally as if we were children again.

I slipped out of the room, and no one stopped me. I went to my old refuge on the stairs, the place that had sheltered me in my childish troubles, and in spite of myself, I began to cry hysterically. I may have been there an hour or ten minutes, I don't know which, when I heard some one coming along the passage, and I knew Paul's step.

"Agnes, are you there?" he called. "I thought so. I have never failed to find you here after hunting the whole house over. Are you crying? Agnes, are you displeased with me? If I made you unhappy just now, I will take everything back and we will be Paul and Agnes, dear friends, and nothing else."

I couldn't think of anything to say, and I kept crying in an idiotic manner.

"This is getting serious," said Paul after ten minutes had passed. "Agnes, you will make yourself ill. Come with me."

Paul drew my hand through his arm, and we walhed up and down the hall a few times. Then he opened the drawing-room door, and, going to the piano, began to play softly. His music had the desired effect, and I began to grow calmer. Presently I went and stood in the window and looked at the water. Paul stopped playing, and came and stood beside me.

He laid his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Come, Agnes, let us settle this. Aunt Wendover is anxious to know the truth."

"Paul, you asked me that because you were sorry for me, not because it was your wish," I said, facing him.

He laughed at that, and his eyes were frank and honest as he said, "Agnes, you know me better than that. I would be a scoundrel if I

feigned what I did not feel. You don't doubt my word, do you?"

"No, but——"

"But what? My only wonder is that I ever gave a thought to any one else. This is the truth, Agnes. I had been in Germany but a little while before I saw my mistake. I will try to make you very happy. You are not afraid to trust yourself to me, are you?"

"No, but I hesitated for your sake. I know you are throwing yourself away," I said, thinking of my plain face.

"Oh! if that is all, that is my lookout," said Paul gaily. "Now let us go and see Aunt Wendover."

CHAPTER XXII.

AGNES' STORY.

"DEATH is another life. We bow our heads
At going out, we think, and enter straight
Another golden chamber of the King's
Larger than this we leave, and lovelier."

AUNT Wendover rallied after Paul came, and she seemed quite like herself again.

"I am almost sorry that I hurried you home, Paul," she said one day.

"It was time that I came," he replied. "I should have come in the spring anyway."

"I believe that I am getting better, and it must be your coming that has worked the change."

"You certainly are better, Aunt Wendover. I am a doctor myself now, and I shall watch you so closely that you cannot fall so ill again."

Aunt Wendover shook her head. You can't put it off very long, Paul. I am an old woman, much older than my years. I wore myself out without waiting for time to do it for me. I am thankful that neither you nor Agnes have a disposition like mine. I sit and look at you

both, and think how useful you will be in the world, and then I am filled with regret for my wasted life."

"Don't, aunt, don't. You have lately done all you could, and Christ will forgive the rest. Don't dwell on the past."

"I can't help it, Paul. I was thinking only this morning about the history of this house. If its walls could speak they might tell strange stories. I am glad that its new owners will be people of a different stamp. Paul, when are you and Agnes going to be married?"

"The very question I wanted to ask! You would like it to be soon, I suppose, and I can see no need of putting it ahead. Agnes hasn't much pride in dress, and I don't imagine that she will insist upon sending to Paris for her *trousseau*."

"She ought to have the best that money can buy. But I know that fine things do not please her. She looks lovely to me in her brown merino, and as for ornaments, she has enough."

"Ornaments!" laughed Paul. "I never saw her wear any but the bracelet I gave her years ago."

"Agnes wears 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,'" said my aunt.

"And surely 'her price is above rubies,'" said Paul, catching Aunt Wendover's meaning.

I rose, meaning to run away from their compliments, but Paul would not let me escape. "Come," he said, "set the day. We have had quite a long acquaintance with each other, and I don't see why we can't be married very soon."

"I am waiting to see if you are going to change your mind again," I said, taking up my sewing again, since Paul's broad back set against the door prevented my escaping.

"I suppose I deserve that fling," said Paul, running his fingers through his hair, "but I am not quite such a boy as I was then. Aunt Wendover, what do you think was one of Agnes' objections to marrying me? Because I am a trifle younger than she is!"

"A whole year and a half," I said, "and I am sure I feel twice as old as you do."

"Poor Agnes, she has had care enough to make her feel old," said Aunt Wendover.

"And all the time that she was doing her duty, I was away enjoying myself. Selfish that I was, I should have remained at my post instead of running away like a child in the sulks. Agnes Wendover," said Paul, turning around to me, "I don't believe you have any faith in me, even now!"

But I had, and I told him so. He laughed, and seemed satisfied with my answer.

"Come, let us decide about the wedding,"

Aunt Wendover began again. "Something may happen to me, and I want to see you children married very soon. Paul, your father's birthday comes three weeks from to-morrow. I would like you to be married then. How would you like it?"

"Very much, if Agnes will consent, and I suppose she is thinking about those dresses. How is it, Agnes?"

"It shall be just as you and Aunt Wendover make it," I said. "Suit yourselves." I could not refuse, for I knew that Aunt Wendover had no other wish in the world.

"Good child," said Aunt Wendover, smiling her satisfaction.

"But I don't want any fuss made," I said, "or I shall be frightened to death. I don't want any one here but Dr. and Mrs. Barnham, though I don't much mind if Mr. Bishop comes."

Aunt Wendover showed much interest in the preparations that went on, and every day she seemed better. But we were deceived, perhaps mercifully so. It wanted but a week of the day set for the wedding when she was suddenly taken worse. I had never seen her quite so ill, and I feared that she would never speak again. After a while Paul and Dr. Barnham

relieved her a little, and she said painfully, "Send for the minister."

We despatched John in all haste, and as soon as possible he returned, bringing the pastor with him. We supposed that she wished for the minister because she knew she was dying, but as soon as he entered the room, her meaning became apparent. I was standing close beside her and so was Paul! With an effort she took a hand of each, and said, "Children, I wish you to be married now. Paul, I shall die easy if I know that Agnes is your wife. Something may happen if it is delayed."

Paul turned a shade paler. "It shall be as you like, Aunt Wendover," he said. "But do you think this is death?"

"I know it is," she murmured. "Agnes, you will not refuse me this last request?"

Paul drew the minister aside and whispered a few words to him. Then he came and stood by my side, and in a few solemn words the good old pastor made us one.

"Thank God!" said Aunt Wendover, groping for my hand; for already the dimness of death was upon her. "Agnes, dear child, good-by."

"I stooped to kiss her, and she smiled faintly. Then Paul bent over her, and wiped the death-damp from her forehead. She tried to close her fingers upon his, and she whispered, "Fare-

well, Paul. I shall soon see him—Jesus! Yes, it is light beyond. I was so afraid that it would not be. Where is Agnes? Be kind to her; Paul, make her life as bright as possible."

And with these words upon her lips, she breathed her last.

It always seemed so pathetic that she thought of me in her last moments. Surely she atoned for any harshness and neglect in years that were gone!

As we went to look at her later we noticed how peaceful was the expression of her face. The lines about her mouth were softened, and her features had lost the stern expression that was so natural to them.

"She is at peace," I said, giving vent to the tears that would fall.

"Yes," said Paul, wiping his own eyes, "she is at peace after long years of strife. I think there must be joy in heaven when such a tempest-tossed mariner as she reaches a safe haven. For her sake I am glad that she is gone home; but we shall miss her, Agnes."

"Yes; it does not seem possible that she is gone forever. No, I will not grudge her her rest!"

On the third day we carried her to the church where she had lately loved to attend, and after the services, we laid her to rest in the graveyard beside her father and mother.

The great stone house looked gloomy enough as we came home, and though it was a mild April day, I shuddered as I passed through its doors. I could not grow accustomed to her absence. A dozen times each day, I started to go to her, and sometimes I reached the door of her room before I remembered that she was gone. Paul, too, missed her as much as I did, and we were quite lost without her.

One morning as we sat at breakfast, Paul said, "Agnes, what do you say to leaving the Island for a few months, and taking a tour? I think a change will do us good. Should you like it?"

"Yes, I should," I said, after thinking a moment.

"Then that settles it. We will go, and the sooner the better. We ought to have an outing before we settle down into staid old married people. After that we will come home and decide what we are to make of our lives. I mean to do something worth doing, but I think that a short play-spell will be good for both of us. You are all worn out with care and watching, and you need a change."

We hurried our preparations, and in a very short time we left the Island behind us and went out to explore the world that seemed like a fairy-land to me.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAUL'S STORY.

SHE makes her life one sweet record
And deed of charity.

Longfellow.

TWO years passed before we saw the Island again. We roamed over Europe, enjoying ourselves to our heart's content. We gave ourselves up to making the most of our holiday, and we acted like two children. But after a while I grew tired of living in hotels and inns, and I began to think a great deal about Wendover House. I said nothing to Agnes on the subject till I began to suspect that she, too, was homesick. We had been climbing the Matterhorn, and as we neared the foot of the mountain, and sat watching the sun go down, I said, "Agnes, let us go home. I believe I want to see the dear old Island again."

"So do I," she replied, "I have been going to speak of it, but I hated to disturb your enjoyment. I can hardly wait till I get there. I have enjoyed my trip abroad very much, Paul. I don't feel as old and worn as I did."

"You are growing younger," I said, laughing at her. "To hear you talk one would think you were middle-aged at least, instead of twenty-seven."

"Twenty-eight," she said, "for my birthday comes next month."

"Have your own way," I said, then I asked, "Agnes, what are we going to do with ourselves when we get home?"

"Paul, I wish I knew," she said gravely. "I have been thinking a great deal about it. We have a great responsibility, Paul. God has given us youth and health and leisure and means. I wish I knew what he wants us to do with them all."

"Let us leave it with him, and ask him to direct us," I said. Will you make it the subject of prayer?"

Agnes promised, and we walked slowly toward our inn.

We did not mention the subject till a couple of months later when we were at home. We were sitting in the drawing-room one evening, and as I watched Agnes' needle flying to and fro, I said, "Agnes, do you remember our talk the day we climbed the Matterhorn?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, have you solved the problem of our existence?"

"No, have you?"

"Perhaps. The truth is, I have an idea, but I don't know whether it can be carried out or not. I was just thinking that perhaps we who once so long ago found a home at Wendover House, might make a home for other orphan children."

"Where would you get your orphans?" asked Agnes, snipping at her thread. "But what a foolish question when the world is full of homeless, friendless little ones, and no Aunt Wendover to take them." She began to walk around, and I knew that she did not consider the plan an impracticable one. I have always stood in fear of Agnes' clear, sound judgment, for I have always been told that she is more "practical" than I am.

I had just made the merest suggestion, but she was arranging details at once, I lay back on the lounge and watched her and waited for what she had to say.

"One thing is sure; we have room enough for a small army. There is the ball-room which we never will use, it will make a charming school-room if once fitted up, and there are rooms and rooms in the second and third stories that are never opened. It would do me good to have life in them once more."

"Why, Agnes, how enthusiastic you are," I

said. "I didn't know that you would think well of my suggestion."

"The only drawback is this, I am afraid that you will have too much care. Are you not going to overdo? You have your poor people in the city, and you are always hunting up some object of charity. You really do a great deal, Paul."

"Nonsense, Agnes! Don't worry about me. I was just about to remark that I feared that this new departure might bring you too much care. If you think best, we can give it up, and keep on working as best we can."

"No, I don't wish to give it up. There are many people who are willing to help with money and other things, but not many are so situated that they can take needy children into their homes, and by God's help make honest men and women of them. That is what I want to do, and I am so glad you had the idea given to you."

"But, Agnes, there will be some unpleasant things about it," I said. "We must look at all sides of the question before we decide."

"I know it will not be exactly pleasant to have our home-life spoiled, and that is the first thought that came to me when you broached the subject to-night. But I don't think it need disturb us so very much, and if it does, we will

solace ourselves with the thought that we are not living unto ourselves."

"That is my good Agnes," I said, going to her and giving her a kiss.

"Another thing that makes me like the plan is this, I think that it would please Aunt Wendover if she were here now. There is no telling what good her money may accomplish if we are faithful stewards. But tell me what put the idea into your head, Paul?"

Then I told her how I had lately come across two orphan children who were likely to be sent to the almshouse. "And that is just where I don't want them to go," I said. "I can't forget the kind hand that took me from an almshouse, and I feel that I ought to prevent these children going there."

"O Paul, dear, don't mention your being in that horrible place, I can't bear to think of it," Agnes cried.

"It did not hurt me," I replied, "but the memory is not pleasant to me."

"How do these children look? Tell me about them, please."

"They are bright children of six and eight. The boy is named Harry, and he is the eldest. His sister's name is Nannie. She would be a lovely little thing if she was carefully dressed and had nourishing food for a little while.

Their parents were respectable people, they simply were very unfortunate."

"Poor little things," said Agnes. "Paul, I think we must take them. We'll begin with these, and if any more such cases come under our observation, we will take it as a sign that this is our work."

"Very well," I said, quite satisfied that we would find plenty more cases before long.

"When will you bring those children?" Agnes asked.

"To-morrow if you like."

"I do like. Paul, there is the very little room I used to have! I am going to fit it up for the girl. Then there is the room right next, the boy shall have that. Oh, there are great possibilities in this big house! Won't some of the old ghosts stare to see a lot of romping boys and girls disturbing their stately walks!"

I laughed at that. "Agnes, I believe you are disappointed because you never yet found a ghost in Wendover House."

"No, I never found one, but it is a fact that I never enter those shut-up rooms without a shudder. And to this day I fancy that some of those old portraits in the gallery move as I pass.

"I know there will be plenty of people who will try to frighten us. They will tell us what

mischief and trouble a lot of children will make. But we shall not let them frighten us out of doing the Lord's work. I know where we will get sympathy; from Dr. Barnham and his wife."

"Oh, the doctor will be delighted. He says that he never had much money to spend on charity, and he means to enjoy helping us spend ours. I think, though, that he gave a great deal. His income has always been small, for he was forever doctoring poor people who could not pay him."

"He is one of the salt of the earth," said Agnes, thoughtfully. "Aunt Wendover used to wonder how he could be contented in such a life; but I am sure he has been very happy."

That was the beginning of it all.

The next day I took Nanny and Harry home, and Agnes received them in her own sweet way. They had been there but a short time before she confided to me that she really began to love them. And as for the children, they thought her an angel. And it was no wonder, for she was so good to the poor little waifs!

After a while another boy came, then two little girls, then two more boys, and Agnes made a place for them all. It was surprising what cosy rooms she fitted up for the little strangers, and more surprising still to see how

they changed under her management. For some of them were not such promising specimens as Nannie and Harry, and I often wondered what Agnes would do with them. She made some failures, of course, but many more successes. Gradually matters got systematized. There is a school-room where lessons are given under Agnes' supervision, a needy young lady being the teacher. As soon as the girls are old enough, they are taught housekeeping and sewing, for Agnes considers them necessary to a thorough education. The boys, too, help in the lighter work on the Island, thus developing their frames, and getting the necessary exercise. There is plenty of room for romping, shouting boyhood, for the Island covers fifty acres.

I think that Agnes and I are happier than if we were living alone in state and splendor. There is much comfort in knowing that we are doing something to lighten the world's misery; though we sometimes get discouraged as we think of the masses of needy ones that we cannot help. If Wendover Island were as big as Greenland, and Agnes could have it crowded with poor children, I think she would be perfectly content.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AGNES' STORY.

IT is so long since I have undertaken to chronicle anything about Wendover House, that it seems strange to begin. There is not much to tell of it or its inmates, for our lives run on in the old uneventful way.

It is nearly eight years since Nannie and Harry came to the Island, and now instead of two orphan children we have twelve. Among them are boys and girls of all dispositions and characters. Nannie and Harry are nearly grown up, and they are a great help to us in the school-room and elsewhere. No others can be quite so near to us, although we dearly love all our little people.

Of course this work of ours often has some unpleasant features. We take any needy child that we hear of, and sometimes we find one that is hard to control, even vicious. But there is hope even of such, and with labor and prayer they are brought to better things.

Paul is the leading spirit of the enterprise. I know that he is prone to give overmuch

credit to me, but it does not belong to me. The plan was his, and it is worthy of him. The little fair-haired laddie who used to cry out in his sleep as he dreamed of suffering humanity, is doing much to relieve suffering. He is so kind, so patient, and yet so firm, that he works wonders on our most unpromising boys. They love him, and most of them are trying to imitate his example. And well they may, for if there were more men like Paul, the world would be a better place. He is constantly at work in the city opposite, as well as on our Island, and his skill in healing both mind and body, enables him to do much good.

He sometimes tells me that the fondest dream of his life has been realized. I don't know that I ever indulged in any dreams, but I do know that I am perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied in the life I lead.

I am pleased that Paul still retains an ardor for his old pursuits. Music is his chief pleasure. It rests him when everything else fails; for he is often weary with his labors. He has had an organ built in the music-room, and often he plays at twilight as was his custom years ago. The children will leave their play, and cluster around the door to listen. I know that his music helps us all, and I am sure I shall never hear any music half so sweet as

Paul's, till I listen to the song of the redeemed on the "other side."

He still keeps his den in the tower, and when he goes there and shuts the door, I know what that means. And after he comes away I steal up-stairs and find a scrap of paper that holds a bit of verse that now and then comes to him in his busy life. He smiles at my praise of his writing, but he always leaves his papers where I can find them. And I am as proud of them as I was of the childish efforts of thirty years ago.

So he is the same Paul, with his passion for philanthrophy, music, and literature, and I am glad that he is the same. He often tells me that I am the same Agnes, and I fear that I am. I seem to make the same mistakes I used to make, though I am thankful that I am as much of a woman as I am. I know that in one respect I am changed, for Agnes Raymond is a much happier woman than Agnes Wendover was. I suppose it is because I am doing something worth doing, and, besides, I have many, many blessings, more than I deserve. Aunt Wendover's last wish for me has been granted. My life is bright, for which I thank God!

Dear Aunt Wendover! she has been at peace for more than ten years. That is the way Paul and I always speak of her. We never say that

she is dead, but always at peace, or at rest. I suppose we like to think of her peace, for she had little of it here. I know she would approve of our course, if she were here now, and I like to remember that it is her money that is doing the work. It seems as if she has a share of it. Paul and I often talk of her, for there are many things to remind us of her. And no spot is more sacred to us than her grave. We often go there on the Sabbath, and carry some of the flowers plucked from bushes that she tended with her own hands.

Our eldest child, a seven-year old girl, is named Alicia Wendover, though we have shortened the name to Alice, as better suited to the little maid. She is tall and dark-eyed, a "clear Wendover," as our friends are won't to say. Her brother, three years younger, is named Arthur Grey, for his father's friend and mine. He is fair and handsome, looking much as Paul did as a child, and he has Paul's happy disposition. Our own children grow up among our orphans, and while ours must, of course, be much dearer, but little difference is made. We are like one large family, all bound together in love.

Wendover House looks just the same as of old. Its gray walls are overgrown with ivy, and its great stone lions still guard the entrance.

But within it is very different. There are no more stately parlors, no closed rooms. The sunlight streams in at every window, for Dr. Paul prescribes sunlight for all ills, and I love it as much as when I was a child. The grounds are full of tents and hammocks and games, and boys and girls roam over the whole Island, intent upon some sport. Just now I look from my window in Paul's den, where I love to sit when I have a leisure hour, and I can see the other end of the Island where four or five of our boys have pitched a tent, and are boiling a kettle in true gipsy fashion. Nannie is leading little Arthur across the lawn to meet Harry, whose boat is just touching the wharf. A couple of half-grown girls are playing croquet before the house, and Alice and two little girls of her own age are having a game of "cats' cradle" close by. It is a pleasant, peaceful scene, and yet my eyes grow dim as I look on it.

But Paul is coming from the city. I see him wave his hat to the youngsters on the lawn. He must not find me here with tears in my eyes, so let me hasten, and finish my task before the bell rings for dinner.

We are only children going to school, and we cannot have our life-lessons perfectly. I will not mourn over the mistakes and short-comings

of my yesterdays. Let me rather press on, determined to do better with my to-morrows. So I hope our life will float on, happy and blessed, till one day we shall exchange this world for another, and go on working where we shall make no mistakes.

Our home is a delightful spot to us, but where our happy Island is located, I will leave the reader to guess. I will say only that it is not in Utopia.

THE END.

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